

A
VINDICATION
OF THE
CONFESSIONAL,

On the Case of SUBSCRIPTION to Human
Articles of Faith.

In Three Parts.

[Price Three Shillings and Six-pence.]

A N N U A L

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11-7-78

A N
A N S W E R
T O
L E T T E R S

CONCERNING

Established Confessions of Faith;

BEING A

V I N D I C A T I O N

OF THE

C O N F E S S I O N A L,

On the main Points relative to the Case
of SUBSCRIPTION.

By BENJAMIN DAWSON, L.L.D.
Rector of Burgh, in Suffolk.

The whole Church cannot make one Article of Faith. *Cranmer.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for F. NEWBERRY, in St. Paul's Church Yard;
JOHNSON and PAYNE, in Pater-Noster-Row; E. and
C. DILLY, in the Poultry.

M D C C L X I X.

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A. N. S. W. I. E.

L. B. T. R. S.

CONTRACT

Published by the

British

VINDICATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE



By BENJAMIN WILKINSON, M.D.

London: Printed by J. B. Nichols, 1788.

LONDON

Printed for J. B. Nichols, at the
Printers, in Pall Mall, 1788.

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AN
ANSWER
To a BOOK, entituled,
LETTERS
CONCERNING
CONFESSIONS of FAITH,
AND
SUBSCRIPTIONS
TO
ARTICLES of RELIGION
IN
Protestant Churches,
Occasioned by the
CONFSSIONAL.

PART I.

LONDON,
Printed for F. NEWBERRY, No. 20, in St. Paul's Church-Yard,
MDCCCLXVIII.

ANSWER

To a BOOK, entitled,

LETTERS

CONTAINING

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH,

AND

TESTIMONIES

TO

ARTICLES OF RELIGION

IN

Primitive Churches

as collected by the

CONFESSIONAL

PART I

LONDON

Printed for L. Newbery, No. 10, St. Paul's Church Yard.

MDCCCLXXXII

BRITISH
MUSEUM

~~Form arguments in favour of the right, as~~
~~well as of the wrong, of regarding such~~
 the question as the question hath respect to
 are inconclusive. Your attempting to win-
 are the advocates of a party in sub-
 is, however, not to mention the concern it
 gives me on another more important con-
 sideration, is inconsistent with your plea for

A N
 A N S W E R
 T O
 L E T T E R S, &c.

L E T T E R I.

Dear Sir,

AS you desire to have my judgment for the confirmation of your opinions, or the conviction of your mistakes, respecting the Confessional, you ought not to be offended, if I give it without reserve. Hear then, Sir, in one word, my judgment—
 “ The *design* of the author of the Confessional
 “ you have set in an *invidious* and *false* light.

“ Your



“ Your arguments in favour of the *right*, as
 “ well as of the *utility*, of requiring such
 “ subscription as the question hath respect to,
 “ are inconclusive. Your attempting to vin-
 “ dicate the lawfulness of a *latitude* in sub-
 “ scribing, not to mention the concern it
 “ gives me on another more important con-
 “ sideration, is inconsistent with your plea for
 “ the *utility* of subscription. Your objections
 “ to, and reflections upon, the expedient of-
 “ fered by our author, to put this matter of
 “ subscription upon a better footing, strike
 “ equally against *all* expedients, and too plainly
 “ indicate what turn they are intended to
 “ serve.”

I am,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant, &c.

LETTER

LETTER II.

WITHOUT any apology, Sir, for the frankness with which I have given you my judgment upon your remarks on the Confessional, I proceed to support it by a consideration of what you have advanced. And first, for the *design* of the Confessional.

The Confessional, you tell us, "*however it may appear, at first sight, to be wrote in favour of the protestant cause, appears to you to aim at more than perhaps the author is willing, at present, to acknowledge.*"*—An insinuation this, that the Confessional may *not* appear, on a second sight, or more attentive perusal, to have been written in favour of the protestant cause. Your second letter is wholly taken up with attempting to shew, that the

B 2 author's

* Letters, page 1.

author's *real* design is different from that which he in general *professes* to have: And at page 154, after having hinted it in almost every preceding page, you speak out your apprehension, that "the tendency of the arguments in the Confessional is *entirely* to *subvert* the ecclesiastical establishment itself."

SUCH is the light in which you have set the *design* of our author. Ah, Sir, how little regard is due to professions of candour in a Controversialist! "I am far," said you, "from wishing to set our author's design in an *odious* light." *

Yours, &c.

* Letters, page 17.

LETTER III.

FROM the invidiousness of the charge, which you have brought against our author, respecting the *aim* and *design* of the Confessional, I pass on, Sir, to consider the ground on which you would support that charge.

THE *real* design of this noted work, though you own only further reformation of the articles is in general pleaded for, is yet, you apprehend, to shew, "*That all ecclesiastical establishments, with a test of principles, are unlawful.*" * Many particular expressions, in your judgment, import no less; and the whole tenour of the arguments confirm it. Those expressions, which you have produced as select instances, I shall first examine with as much brevity, as a compliance with your request will admit of.

* Letters, page 2.

OUR author has said, "*The toleration con-*
tended for by the advocates of religious free-
dom, was absolute liberty, just and true liber-
ty, equal and impartial liberty, upon the prin-
ciple, that neither single persons, nor churches,
nay, nor even commonwealths, have any just
title to invade the civil rights and worldly
goods of each other, upon pretence of religion." *

This is the first instance you bring in proof of our author's design being to show, *That all ecclesiastical establishments, with a test of principles, are unlawful.* On comparing these two propositions with the greatest attention, I am not able to perceive such an agreement between them, as should lead me to infer the latter from the former. Certainly there appears to be no necessary, no *immediate* connection between the two. On the contrary, I find no difficulty in conceiving the lawfulness of an ecclesiastical establishment, with a test of principles,

on

* Confessional, preface to the first edition, page 52 of the second edition.

Letters, page 3.

on the reasoning of the advocates of religious freedom; nay, an ecclesiastical establishment, which has a purely *scriptural* test of principles, without any mixture of human and dubious principles, I cannot conceive (such is my notion of gospel-liberty) to come short of that *absolute, just, true, equal and impartial* liberty, which is contended for. To me, therefore, it is no proof of a design to subvert *all* ecclesiastical establishments, that our author is found in company with these *unreserved* advocates for religious freedom.—But let us see how you arrive at your conclusion.

“ Now, you argue, as our author all along
 “ calls the requiring subscription an unjust im-
 “ position, and invasion of Christian liberty, he
 “ must look upon all such requiring of subscription,
 “ to be an invasion of the liberty he contends
 “ for; and consequently unlawful.”*—Here are

two

* Letters, page 3.

two things which prevent my admitting the proof.—One is, that whereas you affirm, that our author *all along* calls the requiring subscriptions *an unjust imposition and invasion of Christian liberty*; I do not know that he hath *once* called it so: And as, upon this suggestion of your's, I have carefully searched the Confessional, and don't find it to be the case, and moreover find, that the author has actually acknowledged the seasonableness of requiring subscription of a certain kind, I have surely great reason to believe, that you assert this upon no just ground.—The other thing is, that I cannot be certain of your meaning in saying, “all *such* requiring of subscription.”—All such as what?—Would you not shew, that our author is against *all* subscription?—That he aims at the subversion of *all* ecclesiastical establishments, with a test of principles?—Is not the expression we are now considering fixed upon as importing *no less*?—It is difficult therefore to understand what you refer to, when you say,
“such

“such requiring of subscription.”—But you
 add, “*nay, the very force of the argument*
 “*depends upon this sense of his expression;*
 “*because he is here endeavouring to shew, that*
 “*the test-act, or any test-act requiring religious*
 “*conformity, is such an invasion.*”*—In which
 also you are under a mistake: For he is *here*
 only speaking of *test laws, religious tests, en-*
 joined as a qualification for holding *civil of-*
 fices; which have been esteemed by very
 eminent men, and those no friends to ecclesi-
 astical anarchy, to be indefensible, “upon the
 “principle, that neither single persons, nor
 “churches, nay, nor even commonwealths,
 “have just title to invade the *civil* rights and
 “worldly goods of each other, upon pretence
 “of religion.” The question here is not,
 whether ecclesiastical establishments, with a
 test of principles, be lawful or not? But,
 whether a certain circumstance *in our, or any*
 other ecclesiastical establishment, can be justi-

C

fied

* Letters, page 3.

fied on the principle of toleration? This is evident from the manner in which our author's remarks on this subject of test laws are introduced. "I shall," says he, "for the present content myself with a few remarks upon one interesting circumstance in our present establishment."* So that your concluding, that he entertains the design of subverting our present ecclesiastical establishment, from this expression under consideration, seems to be owing to your misapprehension of his argument in this place, which is not to shew, that *any* test-act requiring *any* religious conformity is an invasion of christian liberty, (for a *scriptural* test is allowed of, and even pleaded for) but that *such kind* of tests, as he there treats of, are inequitable, are defects and blemishes in those ecclesiastical establishments which admit them, and are not to be supported but on such reasoning as would destroy a *toleration*, in the only true sense of that word.

* Preface to first edition, page 46.

ANOTHER expression, which you quote as an instance of the author's design, is the following, [Confessional, chap. 1. pag. 24, 25.] "*The practice of requiring subscription to human explications of christian doctrine, is now considered and treated, by many different sorts of sensible writers, as an unwarrantable encroachment on christian liberty*" The matter is here, you think, plain with regard to *all* subscription, "except such as is mentioned in page 17 of this chapter."* And is not that, I would ask you, a very material and extensive exception, and enough to satisfy you, that his design is far from being to subvert, or even to oppose *all* ecclesiastical establishments with a test of principles?—But what have you to say to our author's admitting the reasonableness of requiring subscription to the declarations contained in pag. 382, 383?—You will tell me, perhaps, that this is much of the same kind with the exception mentioned above, and

C 2

which

* Letters, page 3.

which you propose to consider hereafter. Be it so. In the mean time, you are to take notice, that, in the expression we have to do with at present, our author doth not deliver *his own* sentiments upon the practice of requiring subscription, but only observes, how it is now considered and treated by *many different sorts of sensible writers*; and he is not to answer for their opinions. But, admitting that we are to look upon this as a declaration of *his own* opinion on the case, yet the thing here objected to, is not the establishing *any* test of principles, or the requiring subscription *at all*, but only the practice of requiring subscription to *human explications of christian doctrine*, without the least hint at the unlawfulness of an ecclesiastical establishment, with a *scriptural* test of principles.

Of the same kind is the next instance which you urge from Confessional, page 26, viz.

“ All

" All imposed subscriptions to articles of faith,
" and religious doctrine, conceived in unscriptural
" terms, and enforced by human authority, are
*" utterly unwarrantable."** What has been
 observed, therefore, on the preceding instance,
 may suffice to expose the weakness of this.
 I shall only add, that at page 14, you your-
 self have observed, that our author acknow-
 ledges the equity of requiring *some* subscription.
 The invidious insinuation, which is subjoined
 to the quotation last mentioned, of the author's
 artful concealment of his full design, and your
 suspicion of his connection with the candid
 Disquisitors, shall be passed by; my purpose
 at present being only to convince you, that
 these three expressions in the Confessional,
 which you have selected as particular instances
 of the author's aim to subvert all ecclesiastical
 establishments, are far from being satisfactory
 instances thereof, and that they afford not
 any

any just ground for the unfavourable suspicion which you have taken up against this eminent pleader for the pure profession of genuine christianity.

I am,

Sir,

Your's, &c.

LETTER IV.

THE expressions, which you have selected as particular instances of the real design of the Confessional, having been considered, I come briefly to shew you, that your suspicion has no better ground from the *whole tenour* of the arguments

“ Is

“*Is not,*” you ask, “*the very first enquiry*
“*proposed in the title-page, concerning the right*
“*in general of establishing confessions?*”*—To
which I answer: If it be so, yet the proposing
such an enquiry doth not necessarily imply a
design of shewing, *that all ecclesiastical establish-*
ments, with a test of principles, are unlawful.
But, as it happens, your question can be
answered in the negative: For the enquiry
proposed in the title-page is *not* concerning the
right *in general* of establishing confessions,
but *in particular* “of establishing SYSTEMA-
“TICAL confessions of faith and doctrine, &c.”
unless the title-pages to our books differ. I
refer now, and shall always, except where
notice is given to the contrary, to the second
edition of the Confessional, the same which
you always quote.—“*Is there not,*” you add,
“*an whole chapter employed in this enquiry?*”†
I answer, No. There is indeed a whole
chapter

* Letters, page 5.

† Ibid.

chapter employed in enquiring into " the claim
 " of a right to establish confessions as tests of
 " *orthodoxy*;"* and those confessions must be
 understood to be of *human* contrivance, because
 they are to attest, that the subscriber believes
 as the church, that sets them forth, believes;
 for this is the meaning of *orthodoxy*, when
 applied to explications of scripture.†

You

* Confessional, page 28.

† *Orthodoxy* is a Greek word which signifies a right opinion,
 and hath been used by *churchmen* as a term to denote a soundness
 of doctrine or belief, with regard to all points and articles of faith.
 But, as there have been amongst these churchmen several systems of
 doctrine or belief, they every one assert for themselves, that they
only are orthodox, and in the right; and that all others are
 heterodox, or in the wrong.—What is orthodoxy at *Rome* is
 heterodoxy at *Geneva*, *London*, and many other places.—What
 was orthodoxy here in the reign of king *Edward VI.* became
 heresy in the reign of his sister *Mary*: And in queen *Elizabeth's*
 time things changed their names again. Various was the fate of
 these poor words in the reigns of our succeeding kings, as the
 currents of *Calvinism*, *Arminianism*, and *Papery*, ebbed or flowed.

Dr. ROBERTSON's *Attempt to explain the Words Reason,*
Creeds, Subscription, &c. Third Edit. pag. 113, 114.

You go on to ask, "*Are not all the arguments calculated to shew, that there is neither necessity, equity, nor utility, in such establishments.*"* Such establishments as what?—Would you say, as ecclesiastical establishments in general?—If so, I answer in the negative.—All the arguments in the Confessional are *not* calculated to shew *that*, but only to shew, that there is neither necessity, equity, nor utility, in establishing *unscriptural* tests of principles.

AGAIN you ask, "*Does not the author endeavour to shew, that our articles can neither honestly be subscribed with latitude, nor with precision?*"†—He doth *not*, that I know of; and this query being put, without producing one instance of such an attempt, must be considered as another mere invidious insinuation. The question immediately subjoined to this

D I do

* Letters, page 5.

† Ibid.

I do not comprehend, and therefore can say nothing to it.

— But you go on demanding, “ *Does he not employ a long preface on Dr. Rutherford, because he has undertook a vindication of this general right?* ”*—Softly, Sir! why will you remind the public of our friend’s successful and uncreditable attempt?—But may not one employ his pen against such a general vindicator of subscription to articles of faith, without incurring the suspicion of aiming to subvert all ecclesiastical establishments?

Our author’s opposition to another eminent Theologue, is next brought in confirmation of the suspicion you have taken up against him.

—“ *Does he not,* ” you ask, “ *largely oppose the bishop of Gloucester, for shewing that our accepting the protection of the civil power is allowable on Gospel principles?* ”†—Pray, Sir,

what

* Letters, page 5.

† Ibid.

what passage in the Confessional do you refer to?—Our author, in his preface to the first edition of that work, is pretty large in shewing the encumbrances, which attended that prelate's enterprize, of vindicating *the test-law* upon the hypothesis of *an alliance between Church and State*.—But I find nothing there, nor in any other part of the Confessional, urged against the lawfulness of our accepting the protection of the civil power. On the contrary, if you would not let an unreasonable and ridiculous jealousy of the consequences of the least innovation possess you, you might recollect many passages which indicate very friendly intentions towards the clergy, those among them especially, who stand most in need of the protection of the civil power, against the pretensions of any that would lord it over their consciences. Nor ought you to judge him less a friend to us of the establishment, because he would plead the right, of *all* undoubtedly

protestant and useful ministers of the Gospel, to an equal protection from the civil power. Should *our* eye be evil, because he is good, and desirous of being serviceable to *others* also?

LASTLY, you say, "*How can we be mistaken in supposing this to be the design of the Confessional, when those avowed espousers of it, the monthly reviewers, no doubt, are of the same opinion?*"*—Very complimentary indeed upon these gentlemen!—But has not your friend, whose judgment on your sentiments is requested, some reason to take this preference amiss?—You are of opinion, that our author is against *all* subscriptions—The monthly reviewers are of the same opinion—Therefore you cannot be mistaken in your opinion:—A just inference, if the reviewers are infallible. But may you not be mistaken in supposing these gentlemen to be of your opinion, as to the design of the Confessional?

No.—

* Letters, page 5.

No—There is no doubt of it, you think;
*“for they would never bestow such eulogiums
 “upon it, unless they supposed it defended their
 “sentiments; and they positively declare, they are
 “against all subscriptions.”** But this is to
 detract as much from the *impartiality* of these
 gentlemen, as before you gave to their judg-
 ment; and to suppose their eulogiums to be
 founded chiefly in prejudice. If I understand
 them aright, however, they rather intimate, in the
review you allude to, that the Confessional
 being an attempt only to set this matter of
 subscription on a *better* footing, comes not up
 to their idea of *reforming*, who are for *no sub-
 scriptions*. Be this as it may, since *they* have
 positively declared, they are against *all sub-
 scriptions*, and only further reformation of the
 articles is in general pleaded for by *our author*,
 what think you of taking up the argument
 against *them*?—As it is, you seem to have
 engaged

* Letters, page 5.

engaged in a dubious cause. — Write then, Sir, pray write against the *monthly reviewers*, these avowed Latitudinarians, these troublesome Eulogists on the side of the Confessional.

I am,

Sir,

Your's, &c.

LETTER V.

Dear Sir,

HAVING laid before you my reasons for judging, that you have placed the design of the Confessional in an *invidious* and *false* light, I come now to make good my second censure upon your remarks, which respects the right and utility of requiring subscription, &c.

You

You enter upon this subject with insinuating, that our author might have reasons, not of the most honourable kind, for *postponing* his enquiry concerning the *right*, after that concerning the *utility* or success, of establishing confessions. One reason, which you surmise he might have, for taking this method, is, “*that he might raise some prejudices against the utility of confessions,—in order to gain a more favourable attention to his attack on the right of enjoining them.*”* Well then, Sir, may not the motive with you for reversing our author’s method, have been to raise some prejudices in favour of the right of establishing confessions, in order to gain a more favourable attention to your attack upon his arguments against the utility of enjoining them?—However it be, you shall not have that pretext of unfairness in me. For which reason I shall comply with your proposal, “*that we first enquire into the right.*”

You

* Letters, page 6,

You think it necessary here, for the sake of precision, the want of which you blame in our author, to consider the claim of this right in a threefold view, viz, "the legal or positive right, " derived from the civil power; the equitable " right; and that derived from scripture."* This is but to affect precision, and the distinction you would make, instead of clearing the way for a more accurate discussion of this point, serves only to clog and encumber the question. †

The subject of the proposed enquiry is, "the right of establishing confessions of faith," † not "the legal right derived (to the church in these matters) from the civil power." ‡ The church, which you consider here as distinct from the state, that is, church-governors, are not the establishers of confessions. To establish them

* Letters, page 7.

† Ibid. page 6.

‡ Ibid. page 7.

them is the province of the *whole legislative* body of the realm. The church may derive a peculiar authority from the civil power concerning them, *when* established: But the *legal* or positive right of *establishing* them is in the *legislature*. And therefore, the *legal* right, in this matter, it cannot be any way necessary to enquire into. It would be only to enquire, whether law-givers have a *legal* right to make *laws*. And as to any legal right, derived *to the church* from the civil power, respecting established confessions, that is another question. So that when you propose to enter, first of all, on the consideration of a “legal right derived “to the church from the civil power,” it is you that use not “sufficient precision, as to the “particular species of right,” and thereby confound, or load with extraneous matter, the present subject of our enquiry.

WHETHER what you have advanced, therefore, in relation to the statute of 13. *Eliz.* be solid, falls not properly under our consideration, being only a question of *fact*, viz. whether subscription to all and every of the 39 articles be by that act, or by the act of uniformity referring to it, enjoined or not? It comes, indeed, to be also a question of right, in respect of *those*, who claim an authority to require such subscription in consequence of the act. But whether *they* exercise a legal right in this matter, is a question foreign to that concerning the right of establishing confessions; and might, I think with you, be determined, could the *prædicers* with propriety be brought to account *there* for their conduct, in one of the courts of *Westminster*.

BUT how comes our author then, you may ask, to enter into a consideration of this “ legal
 “ right derived to the church from the civil
 “ power?”

“power?”—I answer, that he doth this only *occasionally*, and has had the precision to keep it distinct from the consideration of the right of *establisbing* confessions. Thus, what gave occasion to treat of it in the passage of the Confessional to which you refer, was Dr. Rutherford’s having “opened his *Charge* with “a recital of the 36th canon of the church of “*England*; as if that particular law of our “church was to have been the *principal*, if “not the *sole* object of his *vindication*.”

Another occasion of considering this point is taken in Chap. VII. in which the author attempts to discover, whence the practice of subscribing the 39 articles in different senses was derived, &c. But it has nothing to do with the question discussed in the second chapter of the Confessional, and which we are now upon, viz. the claim of a right to establish confessions. In our enquiry, therefore, concerning this claim, it can only be

necessary to treat of the *equitable* right in this matter, and that derived from *scripture*.

I am,

Sir,

Your's, &c.

LETTER VI.

THE legal right, either of *establishing* confessions, or, through an authority derived to the church from the civil power, of requiring subscription to them, being out of the question, we come now to consider the *equitable* right of establishing confessions—*human, systematical* confessions of faith, as tests of orthodoxy. I add this, as necessary to prevent confusion and uncertainty on the subject.

If

If you will give yourself the trouble to consult the 16th and 17th pages of the preface to the second edition of the Confessional, you must be convinced of the propriety of affixing these epithets, from a remark there made on Dr. *Rutherford's* loose manner of wording the design of his *Vindication*; and I should think, moreover, that remark must make you wonder at your own suspicion of our author's design. But to the question——

“*The author of the Confessional,*” you say, “*has repeatedly asserted, as a protestant principle, that every man has a right to judge for himself of the sense of scripture, and the obligations he is laid under thereby.*”*—Now on this very principle you undertake to shew, that the claim in question is equitably made. On this principle I agree to try it with you, and shall follow you step by step to the
upshot

* Letters, page 13.

upshot of your reasoning upon it. If I be tedious, whose fault is it?

THE first use you make of this principle, of the right of private judgment, is to infer from it a right to communicate, or publish one's sentiments to others,—“*As any private christian may judge for himself; so,*” say you, “*he may communicate his sentiments, concerning any passage of scripture, or any point of doctrine, or duty he takes himself to be obliged to the performance of—he may communicate this to one, two, or as many as he pleases.*”*

This, I apprehend, is loosely inferred: For there is a wide difference, as to the consequences of it, between the private christian's judging for himself, in any point of doctrine, and taking upon him to publish, to as many as he pleases, his notions concerning the same. What a man thinks or believes, he cannot help, be it good or bad; and he has good
right

* Letters, page 13.

right to his own thoughts, as they need be troublesome to no one. But that he has as clear and undoubted a right to busy himself in propagating his notions, whatever they be, will not be so readily granted; at least, as a just inference from the principle assumed. However, for argument's sake, in the present case, let it be granted. Then you proceed—

*“ If these agree in their sentiments, and are
 “ of opinion, that it will be for mutual edifi-
 “ cation, and safety in the profession of christi-
 “ anity, to unite in a society for that purpose,
 “ it is lawful for them so to do; provided they
 “ hold no opinions injurious to others, or contrary
 “ to the laws of the civil society to which they
 “ belong.”*—*PROVIDED they hold no opinions
injurious to others!—But pray, Sir, recollect
 the principle on which this society is founded,
 viz. *“ Every man has a right to judge for
 “ himself of the sense of scripture, and the
 “ obligations*

* Letters, page 13.

“ obligations he is laid under thereby.”—
 Every man then may hold his own opinion,
 and can, according to this principle, hold no
 opinions injurious to others; since he cannot
 do any injury to others, by holding only what
 he hath a right to, viz. his own opinion; in
 other words, by *judging for himself*. And
 indeed, it is not easy to conceive, how opi-
 nions can be injurious to *others*, or at all affect
 any persons but *those* that hold them.

SHALL we suppose, therefore, that, instead
 of this proviso against *holding* injurious opinions,
 you meant to say, “ provided they *communicate*,
 “ *publish*, or *propagate*, no opinions injurious
 “ to others.” But then this restriction is incon-
 sistent with your preceding assertion, viz. “ that
 “ any private christian *may communicate* his
 “ sentiments concerning any point of doc-
 “ trine—that he may communicate this to
 “ one, two, or as many as he pleases.” Now,
 if any private christian, before his entrance
 into

into the society you speak of, had a right to do this, he has a right to it still; his becoming a member of the society not excluding him from any christian privilege. Every one of the society, and therefore the whole society, have a right to communicate the opinions which they hold to others—"to as many as they please."

OR will it mend your argument, to understand you as having meant to allow this right to *every private christian*, of communicating his sentiments or opinions, but yet with this restriction, "that his opinions be not injurious to others?"—But such a restriction renders the exercise of this right extremely precarious and uncertain, if it doth not totally preclude it. For when shall he venture to exercise it?—Which of his opinions may he with safety communicate, and which ought he to look upon as injurious?—Or who must be judge in this case?—You will not allow himself, I

F

suppose,

suppose, to be the judge.—That would be to take off the restriction you laid him under in the exercise of this right: Seeing no man can think any of his own opinions, on any point of doctrine, injurious. And if others are appointed judges of the matter, then you subject him to a foreign jurisdiction, contrary to the protestant principle on which you profess to argue. You lodge this right in a partial and unequal manner, and extend it not in the same degree to every private christian. For the judges, according to this supposition, may hold and communicate any opinions, but those which in *their own* judgment are injurious; that is, in truth, *all* their own opinions; while the private christian has not this liberty, but must regulate his conduct, in this respect, by the judgment of other men.

Now, as it is among individuals, so it will be with societies.—And therefore we may ask you, whether you mean that this society you
speak

speak of shall be restricted in professing and
 divulging their opinions, by *their own* judg-
 ment, or by that of some *other* society?—If
 the former, the restriction amounts to nothing;
 as no society can be supposed to judge their
 own opinions to be injurious to others. If the
 latter, your projected society becomes depen-
 dent upon another society, and enjoys not that
 equal liberty, which it would do if founded
 in that protestant principle, on which you
 undertake to vindicate its constitution. See
 then, dear Sir, what confusion and embarrass-
 ment already attend you, in meditating a de-
 fence of the equity of imposing subscription
 to human, systematical articles of faith!

BUT your great caution has suggested ano-
 ther *proviso*, by way of a restriction upon the
 liberty of a religious society in exercising their
 right of *holding opinions*, viz. provided they
 hold no opinions “ *contrary to the laws of the*

F 2

“ *civil*

*“civil society to which they belong.”**—Surely, Sir, you have not considered the nature and consequence of this restriction! Is it not possible that the laws of a particular civil society may some of them be inequitable, unjust, oppressive, and contrary to the laws of God?—It is possible—It is fact—It is notoriously so in many states of Christendom. And shall the religious society be debarred from holding opinions perfectly agreeable to the principles of natural equity and justice, and to the express laws of God, because they are contrary to the laws of the civil society to which they belong?—The unreasonableness of subjecting any religious society to such a state of dependence on the civil power, must surely strike you, without my adding any thing more in illustration of it. For, in one word, it is to subject the Gospel, the blessed Gospel of light and truth, to the institutions of fallible man.—You go on—

“They

• Letters, page 13.

“ *They may use all such means, as to them seem*
“ *proper, to preserve pure amongst them, what*
“ *their consciences inform them is the true christian*
“ *doctrine; all such means being still subject to the*
“ *above restrictions.*”*—But the above restrictions have been shewn either to amount to nothing, and to leave them at full liberty to use any means, *they themselves* shall judge to be warrantable, for this end, or else, to be of such a nature as to leave them at liberty to use no means, but such as shall be approved of by *others*.—But to attend you in particularizing the means of which they may make use,

“ *Particularly,*” you say, “ *they may appoint*
“ *an order of men to be public teachers.*”†—Yes; under the above restrictions.—But, what if only *one* order of men be allowed, by the laws “ of the civil society to which they belong,” to be public teachers?—They are not, by
your

* Letters, page 13.

† Ibid.

your proviso, at liberty to appoint *another* order of men, which they might more approve of, for the purpose of “ preserving among “ them, what their consciences inform them “ is the true Christian doctrine.”

BESIDES, of what, I would know, are they to be public teachers?—May they teach whatever the society hold to be *true christian doctrine*?—No; if their opinions be deemed “ injurious, or be contrary to the laws of the “ civil society to which they belong.”—What privilege, then, is there to any society, in being at liberty to appoint an order of men to be publick teachers, if those teachers are restrained from answering the end of the appointers, by promoting such principles as *they* (the appointers) in their own consciences believe to be *the true christian doctrine*?—Or how can the end of their associating, which is supposed to be “ for *mutual* edification, and “ safety

“safety in the *profession* of Christianity,” be answered under such restrictions?

LET us suppose, (which may make the case plain) that this society is composed of persons, who believe the doctrine of *Arius*, and who hold the *Athanasian* doctrine concerning the *Divinity* to be unscriptural, and the maintenance thereof an impiety.—May the members of this society appoint an order of men to be public teachers of *this*, among other doctrines, “which their consciences inform them is *the true christian doctrine*,” and which they may possibly esteem essential to christianity, and necessary to be taught, in order “to preserve it pure among them?”—If you allow that they may, it must be because you judge that opinion not to be injurious to others. But what if *the church*, in alliance with the *civil* power, adjudge it to be a noxious opinion?—Have they still a right publickly to teach it, in defiance of such authority

authority and judgment against it?—If your proviso bears any certain and determinate meaning, you deny that they have that right. And yet, how will you answer on an inverted state of the case?

The church, in alliance with the state, we shall now suppose to have decided in favour of *Arianism*, and against *Athanasianism*. A private christian judges for himself concerning certain passages of scripture, which to him appear in favour of the *Trinity*. He communicates his sentiments, on this point of doctrine, to several persons, who, agreeing in their sentiments, unite in a society for the purpose of mutual edification, and safety in the profession of christianity. These are desirous to preserve pure amongst them this capital doctrine, which their consciences inform them is *the true christian doctrine*.—May they not use such means as to *them* seem proper to this end?—Particularly, may they not, if they should think

think it proper and even necessary, appoint an order of men to be public teachers of this doctrine?—Or, is there any equity in restraining them from the use of such means, under pretence of their holding an opinion noxious and injurious to others?—I can hardly think you will allow the equity of such a proceeding towards a society of christians, supposed to be conscientiously of this persuasion: Yet this is no more than the consequence of admitting your reasoning. By virtue of your two restrictions this catholic doctrine is effectually prevented from getting ground in the world. These conscientious christians must content themselves with silently enjoying their opinion, without pretending to procure it esteem and respect among others. But to proceed—

“ Upon the same principles, you say, they may assign such an order of men a due provision.—For as such provision is to arise from the property of the society, they may certainly dispose of that property,

or any part thereof, as they deem right." * But what society will chuse to dispose of their property for the maintenance of public teachers, who are not allowed to enforce any principles, but such as are approved by another society? Few persons will esteem it any great privilege to be at liberty to dispose of their property on such terms. Well, this, however, if they please, they may do—" *And consequently, continue you, they may appoint what tests of admission to such office to them shall seem necessary.—For, certainly, they who give the reward, may fix the terms on which it shall be obtained.*" † If I understand you, you assert that the society have this right, of requiring of the candidates for the ministry what tests of their religious principles, ‡ they [the appointers] shall

* Letters, page 13.

† Ibid.

‡ By *tests of admission*, I apprehend you mean, tests of their holding such religious principles, as may be thought necessary qualifications for *their admission* into the ministry. Am I wrong in conjecturing, that it should have been printed, *terms of admission*?

shall think proper, *in consequence* of their being the *paymasters*. Let us admit the reason to be good. Then because they pay their own ministers, their ministers are bound to teach whatsoever opinions the society, who find the money, shall deem right. But what they deem right, it must be remembered, may be deemed wrong and injurious by others, and may be contrary to the laws of the civil society to which they belong. And thus you see the right which the society have in consequence of their giving the reward, is inconsistent with the restrictions they are laid under from another consideration; for instance,

WE will suppose, that the society deem it a necessary term of admission to this office, that the candidates for it believe the doctrine of *Arius*, concerning the Son of God; and moreover, that they will teach and defend the same against all opposers thereof. This opinion may be deemed noxious, the propagation of it sub-

versive of the true catholic doctrine ; nay, it may be blasphemy in the eye of the law of the civil community.—What is to be done?—In consequence of their supporting, *out of their own property*, an order of men for the purpose of public teaching (and * “ they may, *certainly*, “ dispose of that property, or any part thereof, “ as *they* deem right”) they have a right to demand such a test ; and the ministers, who receive the pay, are bound to teach publicly this doctrine. On the other hand, in consequence of the restriction, regarding the quality and tendency of the doctrine, in the judgment of others and in the eye of the law ; they have not a right to require this test of the candidates ; unless you will insist upon their having a right to fix *any* terms of admission, though they are not to allow the ministers, when entered upon their office, to fulfil but *some* part of their engagements. And this is, at best, an useless and unmeaning right, not worth contending for ;

as

as it implies no privilege to the society, nor can any how operate to their advantage.

THE conclusion, therefore, which you now proceed to draw from the above premises, in favour of the right of requiring subscription is inconclusive, or quite frivolous and insignificant.

*" If therefore, you conclude, such a society are
 " of opinion, that the requiring subscription to a
 " certain form of words, is a proper security of
 " the soundness of the principles of their teachers ;
 " they certainly have a right to require such sub-
 " scription."** SUCH subscription as what?—

Subscription to *a certain* form of words?—This is ambiguous. But they certainly have not a right, if your restrictions are admitted, to require *such* subscription, or subscription to *such a form* of words, as *they* may judge to be a proper security of the soundness of the principles of their teachers : Because by so doing, by using their own judgments alone, they may admit persons to the office of public teaching,

* Letters, page 14.

teaching, who *hold opinions injurious to others, or contrary to the laws of the civil society, to which they belong.* Nay, you have not proved, from the premises laid down, that they have a right to require subscription even to the *scriptures*, or to allow their ministers to teach publicly the gospel of *Christ*. For you have restricted the right of the *requirers*, and the duty of the *subscribers*, to a conformity of their religious opinions and doctrines with the *laws* of the *civil* society to which they belong; and some of those laws may happen to be repugnant to the principles of true and genuine christianity. Still more; by your two restrictions you have left it uncertain, whether any private christians, agreeing in their sentiments concerning any points of doctrine, and being of opinion that it will be for mutual edification and advantage in the profession of christianity, can, notwithstanding, lawfully unite in any society for that purpose; seeing it is *not* lawful for them so to do but on this proviso, “ that
 “ they hold no opinions injurious to others, or
 “ contrary

“ contrary to the laws of the civil society to
 “ which they belong.” For what religious so-
 ciety will you name me, that hold not opi-
 nions, which are either deemed by *some* (and
who must be judge in such a matter ?) *injuri-*
ous to others, or which are contrary to the laws
 of the civil society to which they belong?—

HAVING thus minutely attended you to the
 close of your argument for the equitable right
 in question, and found your conclusion in
 favour of the same to be miserably defective,
 and inadmissible, on the very premises you
 have laid down ; you must excuse my touch-
 ing much more briefly on what you have
 thought proper to add, by way of applying
 your reasoning to our present establishment in
 church.

I am,

Sir,

Your's, &c.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

Dear Sir,

IS it possible to make out any good title to require subscription to a *larger form*, than that proposed in the Confessional, * by such reasoning as hath been shewn to be insufficient to justify the requiring subscription to *any* form whatever? It is not possible. And therefore, I look upon the argument, respecting the question we are now upon, to have closed with my last letter. What you produce, however, in favour of subscription to our present forms may seem to merit some notice from me, in return for your civility towards our brethren of the establishment. Your argument is taken from the interesting consideration of justice and equity towards the subscribing clergy. Others and particularly our friend the Professor, have hinted at some *general benefit* proposed by our subscription to systematical confessions of faith: But you are the

* Letters, page 14.

the first, I think, who has undertaken a formal defence of such subscription, *on this footing.*

*"If this society," say you, "encrease, and
 "some mens passions or interests incline them not
 "to submit to the rules voluntarily agreed on;
 "particularly, if they should object to contribute
 "their proportion to the ministers provision, and
 "thereby render their subsistence precarious, and
 "so discourage worthy men from entering into
 "the office; the society may surely apply to the
 "civil power to give a sanction to their own
 "private voluntary rules, in order to secure to
 "the ministers the reward due to their labours.
 "And, in this case, the very making a law for
 "this purpose, implies a necessity of enjoining
 "such terms of admission to their office as the
 "society have thought necessary; because no law
 "can secure any private property, without de-
 "scribing the persons who are entituled to it,
 "and fixing the qualifications, or conditions to*

“ be performed, to give a claim to it; and be-
 “ cause it would be unjust, and contrary to the
 “ end aimed at by the society, in calling in the civil
 “ power, to allow any other terms of admission to
 “ the ministry, than such as the society approve.”*

And this you take to have been exactly our case at the reformation. I am sure it was not. But to avoid entering into an unnecessary dispute, I shall confine myself, on this head, to the purport of your reasoning; which is to defend the equitable right of requiring subscription to the XXXIX articles, &c. of the church of *England*, on this principle, that it is necessary for securing to the clergy the provision due to them.

You had supposed the society to consist of a number of christians, who were united by their own private, voluntary rules, appointing, and paying, by private, voluntary agreement, an order of men for the purpose of public teaching according to a certain form.

What

* Letters, page 14.

What form, by the way, is uncertain. It was provided, however, that the members of this society hold no opinions injurious to others, or contrary to the laws of the civil society to which they belong. Such a proviso implies a restriction upon their right of fixing terms of admission to the office of public teaching. For if they have not a right to hold their own opinions, whatever they may be, concerning any passage of scripture, or point of doctrine, they certainly have not a right to propagate them by means of a public ministry. But now you suppose it necessary for the very support of the legal rights of the teachers, that such terms of admission to the ministry be enjoined, as they (the society) think necessary; and "that it would be unjust to allow any other terms of admission than such as the society approve." This is evidently to take off those restrictions from the society, which before you had laid them under; the judgment and approbation of the society being

now made the only rule whereby the law is to operate for securing the property of the ministers. But waving the inconsistency of this account of the matter with what precedes it, let us examine the consequence of it, and see whether it will carry us to the point you aim at, viz. the equity of requiring, from ministers, subscription to our present forms, “as a
“test of orthodoxy, and consequently, as a title
“to the profits of their benefices.”*

THE society, then, may fix what terms of admission to the office of public teaching they may think necessary and approve. The equity of this you deduce from this circumstance, viz. that the society give the reward. “For, certainly,” say you, “they who give
“the reward may fix the terms on which
“it shall be obtained.”† Let us suppose then, that, besides the church of *England*, there are

in

* Letters, page 16.

† Ibid. page 13.

in this kingdom several religious societies of protestants, that is, agreeably to your own definition, of "christians, voluntarily united, " by certain rules, or mutual engagements, " for mutual advantage in the profession of " protestantism."* Nor is this a bare supposition ; there being at this day many such societies in *England*. Now, because it would be " unjust to allow any other terms of admission to the ministry, than such as the society " approve," each of the societies, fixing its own terms, is perfectly independent on every other, in this respect. One society has no right to interfere with the terms of another.—Further, the right of fixing the terms of admission to the office of public teaching, each according to their own judgment and approbation, is in consequence of their giving the reward. This implies that the reward is given for teaching publicly *according to their own* respective systems, rules, and ordinances. Is not

* Letters, page 12.

not that society then *inequitably* dealt by, the members of which are made liable to contribute to reward the public teachers of another society, who teach according to a *different*, it may be, a *contrary* system?—Is not this, I ask, *inequitable* (for we are now enquiring into the *equitable*, not the *legal* right of a protestant society) on your own positions, respecting the constitution of these societies, and the intention with which the reward is given. For each society is supposed to be founded on private, voluntary rules of their own; and the provision for the order of teachers is to arise from the property of the society, “which property, or “any part thereof, they may dispose of as “they deem right;” and no part thereof can we suppose them voluntarily to dispose of in support of a system of teaching, contrary to that which they prescribe to their own ministers.

YOUR

YOUR argument, therefore, for subscription to the articles of the church of *England*, “ as
 “ a test of the principles of her ministers, and,
 “ in consequence thereof, as entituling them
 “ to the profits of their benefices,” fails in the application of it to fact. For the clergy of the church of *England* you suppose to be entitled to the profits of their benefices, in consequence of their having subscribed, and teaching according to the forms approved by that society of christians. That society is likewise supposed to enjoy the right of prescribing their own system of public teaching, in consequence of *their* giving the reward. And yet the reward of the ministers, in other words, the profit of their benefices, arise, in a considerable measure, from the property of christians belonging to *other* societies, who have their own private and voluntary rules, and who pay their own ministers for officiating according to their own systems respectively. But, Sir, this is too delicate

delicate a matter for me to insist upon. In opposing *your argument* for subscription, grounded on so *interesting* a consideration, I may be thought by some to oppose the establishment itself. Can you blame me then for dismissing this enquiry, which might hazard my incurring such a suspicion, and is moreover carrying us quite wide of our main point.

I am,

Sir,

Your's, &c.

POSTSCRIPT.

P O S T S C R I P T.

THAT this packet was not sent sooner, attribute to my endeavour to reduce the question within its original limits, and my care to come at your meaning, where there appeared any danger of a misapprehension. This, with some avocations unavoidably intervening, may delay my next, longer than you would expect from the known readiness of your friend to comply with any of your requests.

The END of PART I.

THE
SCRIPTURAL RIGHT

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

THAT the people are not left to
D O C T R I N E
question within its original limits, and
C O N F E S S I O N S
are to come at your meaning, where
appeared any danger of a misapprehension.
P A R T I I I
You may delay my reply longer than
would expect from the known readiness of
A N S W E R S
your friends to comply with any of your
requests.
T O

L E T T E R S

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

CONFESSIONAL

Printed for E. B. & Co. 10, St. Paul's Church Yard

MCCCLXX

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THE
SCRIPTURAL RIGHT
Of establishing HUMAN SYSTEMATICAL
CONFESSIONS of FAITH,
AND
DOCTRINE,
CONSIDERED.
BEING
PART THE SECOND,
OF AN *k. with Part 1.*
ANSWER
TO
LETTERS,
CONCERNING
CONFESSIONS of FAITH, &c.
Occasioned by the
CONFSSIONAL.

L O N D O N:

Printed for F. NEWBERRY, in St. Paul's Church Yard.

MDCCLXIX.

THE
SCRIPTURAL RIGHT
Of establishing HUMAN SYSTEMATICAL
CONFESSIONS OF FAITH,
AND
DOCTRINE,
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CONFESSIONS OF FAITH, &c.
Occasioned by the
CONFESSIOINAL.

LONDON:
Printed for E. Newberry, in St. Paul's Church-Yard.
MDCCLXXII.

THE
SCRIPTURAL RIGHT
OF
ESTABLISHING
CONFESSIONS of FAITH,
CONSIDERED.

LETTER VIII.

Dear SIR,

AFTER an unavoidable intermission, for which, therefore, no apology need be offered, I wait upon you with my sentiments upon your argument in proof of a *scriptural right* to establish confessions—HUMAN, SYSTEMATICAL confessions of faith and doctrine—and to require subscription thereto, “ as a test of the soundness of the principles of those who apply for admission into the ministry.”

B

St. PAUL

St. PAUL saith, *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.* He further saith, *Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed:* And also we are commanded, *not to add to, or take away from, what is taught in scripture.*—"These expressions," you readily own, "are conclusive against establishing any thing, as an article of faith, except what is required in scripture, by express declaration, or just inference."* If, then, it shall appear, that you have neither produced from scripture any *express declaration* for requiring *such* subscription; nor have made *just inferences* from the passages adduced, your argument in favour of the right contended for, must be owned to be inconclusive.

Now, that scripture doth not authorize the requirement of subscribing to the belief of human, systematical confessions, by any *express declaration*, you must be supposed willing to allow; because you have not produced any text, wherein such a requirement

* Letters, page 22.

requirement is declared in *express terms*. This matter, then, being dispatched, I shall, in my next, proceed to a consideration of the *inferences* you draw from certain passages of scripture, in support of the right in question, and beg leave to conclude this, by assuring you,

I am,

S I R,

- Your most obedient humble Servant, &c.

LETTER IX.

THERE are some expressions, Sir, in the apostolic writings, which, in your judgment,

“ import a STANDARD, or FIXED FORMULARY,

*“ by which ALL doctrines were to be examined.”**

It shall be my endeavour to shew you, that the two passages in St. PAUL's epistles, supposed to

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allude

* Letters, page 23.

allude thereto, may not import a *fixed formulary*, distinct from scripture; and, if they do import one, that still the inference you would draw from thence is not just and conclusive.

To this, then, you suppose the Apostle to refer, in *Rom. vi. 17.* where he calls it, “ *the FORM of doctrine that was delivered.*” *—But *τυπος* in this place cannot well be understood to mean a particular form, or mode, in which the church at Rome were to make confession of their faith. My reasons are, 1. It is not usual with the apostle to speak so solemnly as he here doth, and in so thankful a strain, of mens attachment to any outward forms. “ *God be thanked,*” says he, “ *that ye have obeyed from the heart*”—what?—The *τυπος διδασκαλίας*?—The *form*, in which you have the doctrine drawn up?—It is not likely this should be the meaning of the apostle. He would not commend, in such high terms, the zeal of his converts for the use of a formulary of doctrine, which you acknowledge to have been

* Letters, page 23.

been *human* rather than *divine*; to have been *variable* at the discretion of church-governors; and which, in future times, it might even be prudent to *prevent appearing any more*.*

2. NEITHER do I think, if we can suppose St. PAUL intended to pass so great an eulogium on their zealous attachment to some ecclesiastical form, fixed as a test of sound doctrine, that he would, in propriety of style, have used the manner of expression he doth, saying that they had *obeyed it from the heart*, ὑπακούσας ἐκ τῆς καρδίας. Obedience to *the doctrine* that was delivered, to the *gospel*, or, as it is sometimes styled, *the faith*, is a manner of speaking proper enough, and not unusual with the New-Testament writers: But there certainly is not the same propriety in speaking of an *heartly obedience*, or entire *subjection of themselves* [ὑπακούσας] to the [τύπος] *formular*y, by which their faith is supposed to have been examined.

* Letters, page 34.

3. THERE

3. THERE is another circumstance, respecting the language of this passage, an attention to which may, perhaps, induce you to think with me, that *τυπος διδαχης* doth not import here a *fixed FORMULARY*, by which ALL doctrines were to be examined—For the apostle contrasts their subjection, or obedience, to this *τυπος*, whatever it may mean, with their former state of subjection to sin.—“*God be thanked,*” says he, “*that ye WERE the servants of sin ; but ye HAVE obeyed “from the heart, &c.*” &c. It is plain that their conversion from sin, which is represented as a person to whom they had been subject, is here intended—their having quitted their former master and his service, and entered into the service of another. If it could be made appear, therefore, that the apostle had at any time drawn up, for the use of the church, a *formulary*, whereby to try the orthodoxy of his converts, especially of candidates for the ministry ; yet, such a formulary cannot, consistently with any propriety of language, be supposed to be alluded

to

to in this expression. A formulary, containing an abridgment, summary, or short explication of scripture, (which is your idea of the very nature of a formulary*) could not be delivered to them immediately on their conversion. The church must have been planted some time, before an instrument of that nature could be drawn up for their use. But it is plain, from the contrast in the text, that the ground of the apostle's rejoicing was, not any pleasing circumstance of their behaviour *since* their conversion to Christianity, but their conversion itself—their change from a state of sin to a state of holiness—that, whereas they had formerly been the servants of sin, they were now the servants of another master.—“ *Ye WERE the servants of sin, but ye HAVE obeyed,*” [*προσέταξα*, in the past tense] evidently referring to the time of their embracing Christianity, or yielding themselves servants to Christ.

T. H. S.

* Letters, page 30.

Τύπος, then, cannot in this place refer to any *formulary*, or abridgment of doctrines, distinct from scripture. Such a supposition by no means corresponds with the apostle's usual manner of speaking in commendation of his converts, for their zealous and stedfast attachment to the doctrine. It would imply also the two gross improprieties of expression above-mentioned; one of which borders indeed upon nonsense.—For, if the receiving with readiness at the apostle's hands, and shewing a zeal for this supposed formulary, may be thought not quite so improperly styled, *obeying it from the heart*; yet it will scarce be allowed to amount to sense, that St. PAUL should thank God, that, whereas his converts had been the servants of sin, they were now become the servants of this *fixed formulary*, having subjected themselves thereto; for such is the contrast in the text.

I am,

S I R,

Your's, &c.

LETTER

LETTER X.

IT will be no surprize to me, Sir, if you should condemn the *critique* sent you in my last, as founded in those minutiae of style, on which one ought not to lay much stress. But if you should do this on barely reading it, without examining it by the context, you will make your friend an unworthy return for his best endeavours to serve you. I lay such considerations before you, as, if I could ever have entertained a doubt about the matter, would *alone*, I think, afford me conviction, that the apostle meant not in this place to express his thankfulness to Almighty God, for the zealous attachment of his converts to this supposed formulary. They are not laid before you, however, in expectation of affording you conviction. But if they induce you to attend to the connection, in which the expression we are considering stands with the context—if they but lead you to examine, whether they are of

any weight—in short, if they should tempt you to criticize on this passage of scripture yourself, they will answer my purpose; which is, to shew you the truth, or to induce you to look for it yourself. But I expect more from what I am going to offer farther on this passage. I expect no less than that it will fully satisfy you, that *τυπος* cannot signify here a fixed formulary, or systematical explication of scripture-doctrine. I had almost said (but so rare an instance of ingenuoufness, even in one who requests information on the subject, is not to be reckoned upon) I expect you will *own* to me your mistake.

St. PAUL, you say, calls this fixed formulary, "*the form of doctrine that was delivered.*" St. PAUL doth not mention here the *delivery* of any form to the *Romans*. He says, that *they* (the church to whom he writes) had been delivered unto this *τυπος διδαχης*.—The words in the original are *eis in παρεδοθητι τυποι διδαχης*.—"ye have been delivered," &c.—So, if *τυπος* must signify a *formulary*, the apostle useth a most uncouth and unprecedented manner

manner of expression, viz. "*the form, or summary, of doctrine, unto which ye have been delivered.*" But surely, Sir, you will sooner submit to give up this passage, as no way in your favour, than maintain that he, who was brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, expressed himself in so bald a manner. That *a form* of doctrine was delivered to the church is sense; though not the sense of this passage, no such circumstance being mentioned—But, that the church was delivered to this *form*, is such errant nonsense as, it may be, you was ashamed of—For I can hardly suppose you ignorant that our English translation, which you follow, is not the true construction of the original.

BUT what then, you will ask me, is the meaning of this text, on a just construction of the original?—You shall have my judgment, Sir; observing only, that if I should not hit upon the exact meaning, it is sufficient, for the matter in dispute, to have demonstrated that *your* sense of it is erroneous. The proper rendering, then, of

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this

this verse is, in my judgment, as follows—
*“ But thanks to God, that ye were the servants of
 “ sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart him unto
 “ whom, as the type [or original] of the doctrine,
 “ ye have been delivered.”* They had been converted to God by the apostle’s doctrine, who preached CHRIST unto them. They had been *delivered over*, as it were, from their former master, SIN, to another master, even CHRIST. *Him* the apostle preached—*He*, therefore, was the *τυπος* of his doctrine—the person to whom his doctrine referred; in allusion, perhaps, to a figure impressed on wax, which refers us to the person or original figure represented thereby.

I am,

SIR,

your humble Servant, &c.

LETTER

L E T T E R XI.

WE are come now, Sir, to examine the other passage of scripture in which you suppose St. PAUL refers to a *fixed formulary*, by which all doctrines were to be examined. In one place, you observe, he calls it “the form of doctrine that was delivered;” in another place, “the form of sound words—*which those, who were fixed by the apostles in particular churches, had received from them.*” * The former of these expressions has been considered already; and, in examining the original, it appeared, that no mention is there made of any form being delivered to the church. It shall appear presently, Sir, that in this other passage, 2 Tim. i. 13. there is not any mention made of what you assert, viz. that *a form was received by TIMOTHY for the particular church in which he was fixed.*

IN

IN the mean time, however, let us suppose that it was as you represent the matter—that *ὑποτυπωσις* refers here to a *fixed formulary* which had been received, and deposited with the bishop. What then can St. PAUL mean by writing to TIMOTHY thus, *ὑποτύπωσιν ἔχ', have the form?*—Does he exhort him to *have* the form, which, according to you, he already had?—If such a form had been received, the apostle might be supposed to exhort him to preserve the same, to keep it, to peruse it with care, or to see that his clergy adhered strictly to it—But hardly would he intreat him to *have* what he knew him to be in possession of—what he reminds him, as you represent this matter, he *had received* from himself:

BUT this brings me to observe to you, that there is no mention made here of any *form* being *received* from the apostle. It is not said, “*the form of sound words, which thou hast received of me.*”—How came you, then, to assert, that St. PAUL, in this place, calls the fixed formulary
you

you contend for, "the form of sound words, which *those*, who were fixed by the apostles in particular churches, *had received* from them?—

The expression in the original is far from importing the *receipt* of any formulary—"ὧν παρ' ἐμοῦ ἠκούσας, *which* [sound words] *thou hast* heard of me:"

Now, pardon me, Sir, but are you not ashamed of your representation of this passage, when confronted with the words themselves?—Bishop BURNET indeed is your authority. But why not judge for yourself, my friend?—Bp. BURNET, you would have seen, if you had tried his opinion by the original, had no authority from the text in question for his observation. But thus it is we go on to revere great names, and to distrust our own judgment, even in those matters, which require only due attention to prevent our being misled concerning them.

BESIDES paying too great a deference to this authority, though a truly respectable one, I own, one may perceive, that you have suffered yourself
to

to be guided by our English translators, in the rendering of the Greek word *ἐκ*. "*Hold fast*" "the form," say our translators; as if the apostle was indeed exhorting TIMOTHY to be tenacious of some formulary he had been entrusted with. But the least attention to the original will serve to convince any unprejudiced person, that this is a faulty rendering; *ἐκ* never signifying "*to hold*" "a thing *fast*:" And I am persuaded you will not, on examination, find it capable of a sense, in which it can well apply to *ὑποτάσσεται*, as referring to a formulary *received* from the apostle.

How then, you may ask, are we to understand this text?—t was easier, Sir, to have pointed out the mistake, and shewn you that the sense, in which you have taken it, cannot be the true one, than it may be to give the precise meaning of the apostle in this passage; or, however, to illustrate it to your satisfaction. But you shall have my best endeavour,

LET

LET us attend, then, to the general design of the apostle in the context. At the 8th verse he exhorts TIMOTHY not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of himself the prisoner of the Lord; but to be partaker of the afflictions of the gospel.*—To encourage him to this, the apostle, at the 12th verse, represents his own state of suffering in the same cause, and lays before him the consideration which afforded him the greatest support, and inspired him with the truest courage, telling him that *he was not ashamed, knowing whom he had believed*. Then follows the verse under consideration, *ΥΠΟΤΥΝΩΣΙΣ ΕΧΕ*, “*Have* “*thou*”—What?—A *fixed formulary* for the trial of all doctrines?—This is too abrupt a transition from the subject of the preceding verses, to be supposed. It is most natural to suppose, that this exhortation to TIMOTHY, being grounded on the above-mentioned consideration, and the example set him by the apostle, respects only

D *himself,*

* Perhaps this should be rendered, “Be thou partaker *with me* “of affliction *for* the gospel.”

himself, his own personal conduct, and, particularly, the fortitude of mind he should shew in bearing the reproach of adversaries, for the sake of the gospel.

ATTEND now, Sir, to what follows the text in question ; and you will see the same design pursued by the apostle. TIMOTHY is reminded, by way of admonition to himself, of the defection of some, who had been afraid of affliction, and ashamed of the gospel. Their conduct, however, is presently contrasted, by way of encouragement, and an example to him, with a signal instance, in ONESIPHORUS, of a generous attachment to the faith, and therein to the persecuted apostle, *whose chain, as it is expressed, he was not ashamed of.* From these admonitions and ensamples, the apostle then draws the following exhortatory conclusions—“ *Thou, therefore, my son, be strong* “ *in the grace that is in Christ Jesus—Thou,* “ *therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of* “ *Jesus Christ.*”

THE passage we are considering, then, appearing in so strict a connection with the design of the apostle in the context, cannot well be understood to refer to any *formulary*, or abridgement of scripture, by which TIMOTHY was *to examine all doctrines*. This would imply the grossest incoherence of writing. It is sufficiently obvious, that it relates wholly to TIMOTHY'S personal behaviour, containing some salutary advice and direction for the attainment of that firmness of mind, so necessary to carry him with success through the work of his ministry, which lay amid a variety of troubles and tribulations of the most formidable and discouraging nature.

LET us next attend to the *proper* import of the word ὑποτύπωσις. Τυπος and ὑποτύπωσις are correlative terms; the latter signifying the express *image*, *impression*, or *delineation*, of the former. Thus, the figure impressed on wax, for instance, is the ὑποτύπωσις of the figure engraven on the seal, which is the τυπος. This, however, considered with respect to the original form, or person, represented

by it, is itself an ὑποτυπῶσις. From hence it appears, that this word, ὑποτυπῶσις, doth not properly convey the idea of an abridgment, or summary, but the *exact copy*, or *entire impression* of any thing. And GROTIUS, you tell us, translates it *exemplar*, adding, *Sed hic intellige exemplar in animo fixum, quod ἰδέαι [ideam] Platonici vocant.**

ON which observations, joined to the preceding one, regarding the design of the apostle in the context, may not the following translation and sense of the passage in question be admitted?—
 Ὑποτυπῶσιν εἷς ὑγιαίνονταν λόγον ὡν, &c.—“ *Have thou a lively idea, or impression, of those sound words, which thou hast heard of me in that faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*”†

I am, SIR, your's, &c.

* Letters, page 27.

† The general purport of the exhortation, I apprehend, is that TIMOTHY would “call to mind, and *bear in mind*,” (not suffering the

LETTER XII.

Dear SIR,

HAVING shewn you, that *τυπαις διδασκαις* and *υποτυπωσις υγιαίνοντων λογων* may not (in the passages quoted, they *cannot*) import “ a STANDARD, “ OR FIXED FORMULARY, by which all doctrines “ were to be examined;” I proceed to enquire, Whether, on supposition that they *do* import such a formulary, your inference from thence be just.

“ ST. PAUL’S

the *impression* thereof to be erased by any persecution for the gospel) “ that sound doctrine, which the apostle, out of a sincere love and “ faithful attachment to CHRIST JESU ,” [*ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ τῇ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*] “ had himself preached in the hearing of TIMOTHY.” [*παρ’ ἐμοῦ ηἰκουσα.*]

If *ἐν πίστει*, &c. is not to be referred to *παρ’ ἐμοῦ ηἰκουσα*, but *ἐχρ.*, then TIMOTHY is exhorted, by his love and attachment to CHRIST, to be mindful of the apostle’s doctrine — I incline to the former. — The difference, however, no way affects our question.

“ST. PAUL’S manner of expression,” you say, “implies a standard, or fixed formulary; and, *consequently*, the governors of Our church have apostolic *example* for requiring subscription to an established confession.”*—Did the apostles, then, require subscription to this supposed fixed formulary?—It doth not appear they did. In the passages we have been considering, there is no mention made of any such requirement. For this practice, therefore, of church-governors, you have not produced apostolic example.

BUT granting farther, that the apostles did require subscription to a formulary of faith fixed by themselves, “as a test of the soundness of those, who applied for admission to the ministry;” yet this doth not authorize church governors to require subscription to *mere human* forms and systems of Theology. The apostles were inspired persons, divinely commissioned by our Lord himself, to publish the truth, as it is in Jesus. The formularies, or confessions, therefore, fixed

* Letters, page 23.

fixed by them, were infallible tests of sound doctrine, being of *divine* institution. But no—

“THESE,” say you, “we suppose were rather *human* than *divine* institutions, though the apostles might be their authors.”* You *Anti-Confessionals*, let me tell you, take a strange liberty in your suppositions. But the *Confessionalist*, for argument’s sake, can indulge you even so far. Extravagant as the supposition appears to me, take it for granted, that the formularies fixed by the apostles, as tests of sound doctrine, were rather *human* than *divine*. What then?—They were still formularies *fixed* by the *apostles*. They were, according to your own account of the matter, “*standards*, by which all “doctrines were to be examined.”† “They “were,” you maintain, “not only actually made “use of by the apostles, but by them delivered “to their successors.”‡ What authority, then, have their successors for fixing *other* standards, or tests

* Letters, page 33.

† Ibid. page 23.

‡ Ibid. page 33.

tests of faith and doctrine, than those which were fixed and delivered to them?—Have they apostolic example, or apostolic precept for this?—So far from it, that St. PAUL exhorts TIMOTHY, if we admit your construction of these texts, to “*hold fast THE form of sound words which he had received from HIM*”—And thanks God, that the church at Rome “*obeyed from the heart THAT form of doctrine which was delivered.*”

WHAT apology, then, have you to offer for this defection, of succeeding bishops, from apostolic authority, in this important matter, and for substituting their own authority?—Or how can you infer a *scriptural* right to establish systematical confessions of faith and doctrine (their own inventions) from the very instructions of the apostles to the contrary?—If any such ancient depositum of apostolic formularies was left with the bishops, and the preservation and tenacious use of the same was so particularly and strongly recommended by them, a plain man would draw this inference from such a supposition, *viz.* That it was the duty of church-

church-governors to have preserved the forms, as they were delivered to them in the apostles own words, and not to have added to, and mixed with them, their own ; nay, to have utterly disused, lost, perhaps purposely destroyed them.—For you are not shy to own, “ that no such ancient “ depositum is *now* to be met with ;” nor ashamed to commend it as a piece of *prudence* in these bishops, “ to prevent the apostolic forms appear- “ ing any more.”* And why?—Because,

In the first place, these being, you argue, “ rather human than divine, it was not *necessary* “ that they should be preserved with the same “ care as the divine writings.”† But sure, Sir, they ought to have been preserved with great care, seeing in the divine writings themselves they are recommended, according to your own comment, as “ the words of faith, and of good doctrine ;” as “ wholesome words ;” and “ the doctrine according “ to godliness ;” as “ forms of doctrine delivered to

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“ the

* Letters, pages 33, 34.

† Ibid.

“ the church, to be *obeyed from the heart—forms*
 “ *of sound words, to be held fast.*”* To prevent
 their appearing any more, when so honourable a
 testimony was given of them in the word of God—
 so strict a charge concerning their preservation
 delivered—may be accounted “ *a piece of prudence*”
 with men, but must be folly and presumption in
 the sight of God.

2. ANOTHER *prudential* reason given for alter-
 ing and varying the old apostolic forms down to
 an utter annihilation of them, is, “ the variation
 “ of the cases and situations of particular churches,
 “ and of the same church, at different times.”†
 Will not sound Christian doctrine, then, let me
 ask you, suit particular churches under all their
 various cases and situations, at different times?—
 Or, among your other suppositions, do you suppose
 the cases of particular churches to have been dif-
 ferent, as to faith and doctrine, and the same
 church

* Letters, page 23.—1 Tim. iv. 6.—vi. 3. Rom. vi. 17.
 2 Tim. i. 13.

† Ibid. page 34.

church to vary, at different times, in this respect? For, if this difference of cases and situations be understood to respect only the *external* circumstances of a church, it enters not into our enquiry, what variety of regulations it might be prudent, at different times, to institute. But no man shall persuade me, that the apostles intended their formularies, or confessions of faith and doctrine, to undergo variations, by way of prudent accommodation to the *varying* faith and doctrine of particular churches. Christian faith and doctrine, Sir, is one and the same, and is not to be moulded and fashioned to the different temper and complexion of the times.

YOUR last argument for preventing the *old* apostolic forms appearing any more, is, “ that
 “ they would only afford matter of dispute, and
 “ obstruct the general use of the *new* ones.”*—
 But how could they have afforded matter of dispute, if they had been preserved and held fast

as the “ FIXED FORM of sound words—the
 “ STANDARD by which *all* doctrines were to be
 “ examined?”—Indeed, after the ancient forms
 had been laid aside, and new ones framed in their
 room, on their appearing again, it is not unlikely
 disputes would arise. It might, for instance,
 were they by some accident to make their
 appearance in our days, be disputed by some,
 whether they were genuine apostolic forms or
 not?—Others, like-minded as yourself, might
 dispute the reasonableness of preferring them,
 though genuine, to the new ones; or even con-
 tend for the suppression of them, as they might
 only obstruct the general use, and thereby the
general benefit proposed by subscribing to the new
 ones. Disputes of this kind might arise. But is
 it not most evident, that the matter of such dis-
 putes would be furnished by the establishers of
 the new formularies; and that the way to have
 prevented all dispute, was, not for the bishops
 sacrilegiously to have suppressed the ancient apos-
 tolic forms, (deposits, as you suppose, on sacred
 record

record to this day) and prevented their appearing any more, but to have prevented new ones ever appearing?—

THUS, Sir, you see, that your argument for subscription to human, systematical confessions of faith and doctrine, taken from the passages of scripture we have been considering, is far from being conclusive, even on your own suppositions. If *τυπος* and *ὑποτυπῶσις* are to be understood as referring to a *form* of faith and doctrine settled by the apostles—If you could shew, that the same was required to be subscribed by candidates for the ministry—If, in support hereof, we allow your reasoning to be just, and that the divine writings themselves bear testimony to your notion of such an ancient depositum having been lodged with the bishop—I say, with all these suppositions, and all these allowances, you are not yet come in sight of your conclusion:—Indeed, the very concessions we make you point another way, and would lead us to the following conclusion,

“ That

“ That no forms ought to be fixed as a STAN-
“ DARD, or unerring test, of faith and doctrine,
“ which are of later date, and of less authority,
“ than *those* which the apostles drew up, deli-
“ vered to the bishops their successors, and charged
“ to be *beld fast*.”

I am,

S I R,

Your most obedient humble Servant, &c.

LETTER XIII.

S I R,

AS *clear* proofs of a scriptural right to establish
confessions of faith and doctrine, you next
urge the following passages—“ *Let all things be*
“ *done to edifying—Let all things be done decently,*
“ *and in order.*” *—Can it be so *clearly proved,*
then,

* Letters, page 31. 1 Cor. xiv. 26.—40.

then, that human, systematical confessions are such edifying things?—To be, in any degree, edifying, you must acknowledge, they ought at least to be true, easy of comprehension, and of a practical nature: And to be equally edifying with confessions expressed in the words of Christ and his apostles, they should be equally certain and safe, in point of doctrine, equally easy of comprehension, and equally referable to Christian practice. But human systems are not to be put on an equal footing with scripture in any of these respects. We cannot so securely rely upon them, as containing, in every article, true and sound doctrine, as we may upon the words of Christ and his apostles.

SOUND doctrine, *systematically* expressed, is, to the bulk of mankind, rendered thereby the more indistinct, liable to be mistaken for a very different doctrine, and to become an occasion of much strife and contention; which introduceth, instead of decency, order, and edification, *confusion*
and

and many evil words and works. I doubt not, Sir, your agreeing with me, that the doctrine of the GODHEAD, as expressed in one of our creeds, is but too palpable an instance of this.—

And,

LASTLY, how frequently do we find, in confessions established by human authority, certain points proposed to our belief, which, true or not, are merely speculative, and have not the least relation to Christian practice!—So that this argument for establishing systematical confessions of faith, grounded on the *edifying nature* of them, is very defective; because it rests on a position, which, to say the best of it, is dubious, and wants proof, *viz.* That all things cannot be done to edifying, nor decently, and in order, “without establishing *human, systematical* confessions of faith.” I know, Sir, that you express yourself more *indefinitely* in this place; and, you may imagine, on that account, more *guardedly*.—Your words are—“without having

“SOME

"some established formulary."*—But, remember, the Question is concerning HUMAN, SYSTEMATICAL formularies.

I am,

S I R,

Your's, &c.

LETTER XIV.

THE next authority, Sir, which you produce for establishing confessions of faith, is, *Tit. i. 5.*—"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things THAT ARE WANTING, *τα λειποντα*, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."—Was TITUS left in Crete, then, for the purpose of establishing confessions, and fixing formularies of faith, or of requiring subscription to those already fixed by the apostles, and deposited with the bishops?—

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If so, this passage was at least *pertinently* adduced. But then it was incumbent upon you to have shewn, that it referred thereto. Instead of which, you seem to give it as your opinion, that it refers only to the authority of church-governors in *indifferent* things. "Let us consider," say you, "whether it refers not to the church-governors' authority in indifferent things?"*—And this is *all* you say on this text. Surely, Sir, it is enough for me to say, in answer to it, that our question is not concerning church-government in *indifferent* things, but concerning the authority of church-governors in things not indifferent, things of the utmost consequence and concernment to mankind, even matters of faith and doctrine, which regard their understandings, their consciences, their eternal salvation.—So that, far from proving the right contended for, from this passage of scripture, you have, in fact, owned, that it has no relation to the subject of our enquiry.

* Letters, page 35.

Not more pertinently is verse 9th of the same chapter adduced here;—"Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince gainsayers."—Now, Sir, if you had *duly weighed*, as you admonish us duly to weigh, this charge given to the bishop, and considered in what manner he himself had been taught *the faithful word*, you would not have thought of bringing such a text to shew the lawfulness of drawing up systematical confessions of faith and doctrine, and requiring subscription to the same. *The faithful word* was delivered by Christ, and by his apostles, under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost. The charge to the bishop is, that he should hold fast this faithful word, not as he might think proper to explain and define it in a *systematical* way, and in accommodation to his own metaphysical notions and dogmata, but *κατὰ τὴν διδασκίαν*, according to *the doctrine*, that is, as he himself had heard and received it of the apostles. And in this way, *viz.* by holding fast the faithful word, as delivered by

the holy evangelists and apostles, rather than as it lies in human systems, may Christian bishops “ be able, *by sound doctrine*,* both to exhort and “ to convince gainfayers.”

WITH less pertinency still, if possible, you call upon us “ to reflect on the directions given “ to TITUS to examine into the *qualifications* of “ those he ordained, or *consecrated*, presbyters or “ *bishops*, and the charge given to the bishops, “ *how to conduct themselves*.” The direction which TITUS received, on this head, from the apostle, was, to examine “ *If any be blameless,* “ *the husband of one wife, having faithful children,* “ *not accused of riot, or unruly.—For a bishop* “ *must be blameless, as the steward of God; not* “ *self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine,* “ *no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover* “ *of hospitality, a lover of good men; sober, just,* “ *holy, temperate.*”†—SUCH are the qualifications, which TITUS was directed to make the subject of

* Διδασκαλία υγιαινουσα, by a sound method of teaching.

† Tit.

of his examination, when he ordained presbyters, or *consecrated bishop*;—Such “ the charge given “ to the bishops, how to conduct themselves;” that, by an exemplary simplicity of manners, purity of life, and an irreproachable conversation, “ they might *convince gainsayers*,” or, at least, “ *stop their mouths*.” And what hath this to do, my friend, with the case of subscription?—

FINALLY, you call upon us “ to consider the “ instructions given to TIMOTHY, concerning “ the choice and examination of bishops and “ presbyters—in the 3d and 5th chapters of St. “ PAUL’s first Epistle to him.”*—In the third chapter we have a description of the qualifications required in him that desireth the office of a *bishop*, and of those which a *deacon* should possess. Out of the candidates for *the purple*, then, TIMOTHY’s choice is directed by the following description—
 “ *A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one*
 “ *wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given*
 “ *to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine,*
 “ *no*

* Letters, page 35.

*“ no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre ; but patient,
 “ not a brawler, not covetous ; one that ruleth well
 “ his own house, having his children in subjection,
 “ with all gravity ; (For if a man know not how
 “ to rule his own house, how shall he take care
 “ of the church of God ?) Not a novice ;—More-
 “ over, he must have a good report of them which
 “ are without.”*—These are all the requisites in a
 bishop, which St. PAUL has, in this chapter,
 thought proper to mention to TIMOTHY. And
 how shall I set myself to convince you, that they
 are all nothing to your purpose ?—I can think of
 no better way, at present, than to advise you to
 consider with yourself, Whether a bishop may
 not possess every one of the above-mentioned
 qualifications, without having himself subscribed,
 or requiring subscription of others, to articles of
 faith and doctrine, drawn up in a systematical,
 unscriptural form ?—But pray, Sir, when you re-
 ferred me to this passage, what might it be that
 struck you at the time ?—You will oblige me by
 the information.—I am curious to know, which
 of

of all these qualifications you conceived to be any how connected with the subject of SUBSCRIPTION.

As for what is said, in this chapter, about the ordination of *presbyters*, or (as they are there styled) *deacons*, it has been already considered, and more at large than I should need to do for your conviction, in a Letter to our friend the Professor. To this, therefore, I beg leave to refer you.*

In the fifth chapter, to which you farther refer us “for a consideration of the instructions “given to TIMOTHY, concerning the choice “and examination of bishops and presbyters,”† I find not any instructions given him on *this* head. *Bishops* are not so much as mentioned. And the instructions he received concerning *presbyters*, or elders, relate not either to the *choice* he should

* Pages 10—19 of A LETTER to Dr. RUTHERFORTH, occasioned by his Second Vindication, &c.—Printed for J. Johnson, No. 8, in Pater-noster Row, and T. Cadell, in the Strand. 1767.

† Letters, page 35.

should make of them, or to the *mode of examining* them for orders; but only to the propriety of his own behaviour towards them, and the measure of respect and estimation, to which those, that discharged the office with fidelity and prudence, were entituled.

So faintly concludes your account of the warrant we have from scripture and apostolic practice to require subscription to articles of faith, systematically drawn up, and imposed by human authority:—And I think any unprejudiced Christian must allow that you have brought no proof from scripture “that the apostles and their successors used *such* a formulary” as the question hath respect to, or “that they appointed church-governors, and that these were to appoint successors, for future times, with power and authority” to fix any *such* formulary, “as a test of the soundness of the principles of those who apply for admission into the ministry.”*

I am, SIR, your's, &c.

* Letters, page 35, 36.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

Dear SIR,

NOTWITHSTANDING the minuteness with which I have considered the texts you have *particularly* adduced in proof of a scriptural right to establish *human, systematic* confessions of faith and doctrine, you might think me still deficient in the examination of your arguments, were I to pass by without any notice what you have more *generally* inferred from our common obligation, as Christians, "to maintain the purity of the gospel-doctrine, as much as in us lies."* You very justly observe, that, "in order to maintain and defend the true gospel-doctrine, we must examine the scriptures, and see what they teach us, and we must *hold fast* the right doctrine." We are also commanded, you farther observe, "not to add to, or take away from, what is taught in scripture."†

* Letters, page 21.

† Ibid.

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Now,

Now, these expressions, and such like, the objectors to human confessions do themselves "urge as arguments of the unlawfulness thereof." To you "they appear in a *quite contrary* light." Scripture, Sir, is so often made to bend to mens purposes, that I cannot wonder at any direction you may attempt to give it. Perhaps a succeeding Anti-Confessionalist may go still farther than you, and urge, in favour of imposing subscription to human systems, the following texts—"Be not ye "called RABBI—Stand fast in the liberty where-
 "with Christ hath made you free.—Neither be ye
 "called Masters; for one is your master, even
 "CHRIST."—I should hardly wonder, after what is here urged in favour of subscription. But take your own road, my friend, in the pursuit of truth—Be willing only to leave it, on conviction that it leads not thither.

"I CANNOT see," you say, "how these and
 "such like commands can be complied with,
 "without having *some settled form*."*—Nor do I

see

* Letters, page 22.

see how this can be done, without *some* settled form.—But holy Scripture is that *settled form* by adhering invariably to which, we shall “ comply with the apostle’s command to *hold fast* the “right doctrine.” To try doctrines by *this* form, to prove them all by *scripture*, and to hold fast those only which are agreeable thereto, is incumbent on all Christians, and more especially on Christian ministers, who are appointed to instruct others in the right doctrine.

BUT this method of trying doctrines, you by no means approve of.—It is too tedious a way of going to work.—It is “next to impossible.”—It is also, in your opinion, “very unnecessary.”*

HAVE you, then, a more *commodious* form to propose, for the trial of doctrines, than that which is already settled by Christ and his apostles? Have you one to which we may *as safely* trust, in deciding upon matters relating to eternal salvation?—Yes, truly; “The use of a judicious
G 2 “formulary,”

* Letters, page 22.

“formulary,” you affirm, “is equally safe.”—
 Dear Sir! for the honour of sacred writ, be more
 careful of your words, more decent and reverend
 in your affirmations. No human forms, the most
judicious that were ever composed, should, in this
 respect, be put upon a level with the scriptures
 of truth. *Equally safe!* Alas! Sir, *infinitely* less
 safe—For, as *tests* of Christian doctrine, there is
no safety in them. They are themselves to be
 tried by the *scriptures*, the only test of divine
 truth.

I AM not afraid to apply this even to our own
 formularies. They are not *tests* whereby doc-
 trines are to be ascertained. Our church, in her
 VIth article, to which you and I, Sir, have sub-
 scribed, acknowledgeth *holy scripture* alone to be
 the test of any doctrine, whether “*it should be*
believed as an article of the faith.” She submits
 her own articles, you see, to be tried by this
 divine rule;—So far is She from setting up her
 own judgment, as *equally safe*, in the trial of
 doctrines,

doctrines, with the word of God; or, considering it as a thing both “next to impossible,” and also “very unnecessary,” to bring every new doctrine to this test.

BUT you proceed to give us your reason for judging it unnecessary “to apply to scripture, “and compare the doctrine therewith—Because,” you say, “when we have once satisfied ourselves, “that our formulary contains a true summary of “scripture-doctrine, (which all ought to do, who “assent to it) we may as safely trust to that, as “to the result of our enquiries in any particular “dispute.”—All candidates, then, for the office of public teaching, ought, before they give their assent, by subscription, to our formulary, to have satisfied themselves, that it contains a true summary of scripture-doctrine. But how can they satisfy themselves of this, but by that very method which you judge to be *very unnecessary*, viz. “by “comparing every one of the doctrines it sets “forth, with the passages of scripture referring “thereto?”—

“ thereto ? ” — And, if they do this, where can be the necessity for any other settled form to examine doctrines by, than *scripture itself* ? — The necessity of *systematical* forms is still more falsely inferred from our obligation “ to comply “ with the command of the apostle to *hold fast “ the right doctrine.*” Human systems of divinity, generally abounding with abstract and metaphysical terms, are much more intricate and uncertain, and consequently less to be depended upon, than the scriptures which they pretend to explain.

FARTHER, let us even suppose, that a *systematical* formulary may be as safely depended upon, as one drawn up in the words of *scripture* ; yet, what have we gained thereby ? — We have not saved ourselves the trouble you propose to be saved by it. On the contrary, this systematical abstract of scripture-doctrine only adds to the trouble we should have in comparing “ the new “ doctrine ” with an unsystematical abstract, or
one

one conceived in scripture-terms.—For, if it be conceived in scripture terms, we are sure it contains true scripture-doctrine; in which case we have but one trouble, *viz.* that of comparing “the new doctrine” therewith: Whereas, if it be drawn up in unscriptural terms, and in a systematical form, the system itself is first to be examined by scripture, before it can be admitted as a test of doctrines.—So that, before a candidate for orders can have satisfied himself, that the *fixed formulary* contains a true summary of scripture-doctrine, (which, you say, all ought to do, who assent to it) he must be at the trouble of comparing every one of its doctrines, if every one of them be *unscripturally* expressed, with scripture; nay, for the reason you yourself give, “with every passage of scripture, which can possibly have any reference to it; since a doctrine may appear agreeable to one, or two passages, considered singly, which may differ from the general tenour of scripture.”

NEITHER

NEITHER the *commodiousness*, therefore, nor the *safety* of a systematical formulary, for the trial of doctrines, doth by any means appear. Scripture, Sir! the word of God, as delivered to mankind by Christ and his apostles, is the only infallible test of doctrines, which regard the salvation of the soul—the only authority to which an appeal can be made with perfect safety. The plain inference is, that we should apply, in *this matter*, to scripture, and not to HUMAN, SYSTEMATICAL formularies.

I am,

SIR,

your humble Servant, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

I MUST beg leave, Sir, to swell this packet with one letter more, in answer to an objection, which, on reviewing your argument, I am sorry to find still lying against the plain inference in favour of scripture-authority, with which my last was concluded.

“ONE might be apt to think,” say you, “that it would be most natural to apply to *scripture*, and compare the doctrine *therewith*.” But your objection to this measure is, that “all parties pretend to scripture-authority”—One good reason, I should think, why, in deciding controversies, scripture *itself*, and not *human*, systematical abstracts thereof, should be appealed to.—For, if all parties pretend to scripture-authority, how can an unscriptural formulary, settled by one party, be judged a proper “way of enquiring into the validity of the particular arguments by which the *other* side maintains its sentiments?”*—For instance——

H

THE

* Letters, page 226

THE church of *Rome*, you well know, holds the doctrine of free-will, merit, or justification by works. The church of *England* explodes the doctrine of free-will, and its consequent, merit; affirming, and recommending it as "an wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, that we are justified by faith only."† Now, by what rule, let me ask you, shall an impartial and unprejudiced enquirer try "the validity of the particular arguments," by which the Jesuits, the true sons of the *Romish* church, maintain these their sentiments?—According to you, there is "no way" for him to take but one of these two, either to compare the arguments with scripture itself, or with some other settled form, containing, in the judgment of the compilers, an "abstract of scripture."‡ The former you apprehend to be "both next to impossible, and also very unnecessary." The latter you recommend as "more commodious, and equally safe."**

Well

† In her XIth article, and homily on justification.

‡ Letters, page 21.

** Ibid.

Well then, the scripture method of examination being laid aside as improper, the enquirer must go the *other* way to work, and try the merits of the case by some human, established system, or formulary of faith and doctrines. It remains to ask you—To which of the systems shall he have recourse for his own conviction, or the decision of the controversy between the parties?—To the *English*, or the *Romish* system?—I shall leave this question with you. Try, Sir, if you can resolve it in any tolerable consistence with your own observation, “that all parties pretend to “scripture-authority.”

I am,

Dear S I R,

Your most obedient humble Servant, &c.

H 2 POSTSCRIPT.

P O S T S C R I P T.

I WAS going to excuse myself the further trouble of discussing the question concerning the *utility* of Subscription, &c. on the following remark made by yourself, *viz.* " that the *right* " being fully disproved, the *utility* seems an immaterial question." But it is your arguments only I have concerned myself with. These may have been fully refuted, without my pretending (indeed it has not been my aim) to have disproved the *right itself*. It lies on the opponents of reformation to prove the right. I shall, therefore, only beg your indulgence of me in pursuing the subject at my leisure, which, I need not inform you, is liable to many interruptions.

The END of PART II.

1020. m 25
3

THE
U T I L I T Y

OF ESTABLISHING

HUMAN, SYSTEMATICAL CON-
FESSIONS of FAITH,
CONSIDERED;

IN AN

A N S W E R

T O

LETTERS concerning Confessions, &c.

Occasioned by the

C O N F E S S I O N A L,

P A R T III.

It will Part I.

L O N D O N:

Printed for F. NEWBERRY, No. 20. in St. Paul's
Church Yard.

M D C C L X I X.

T H E
U T I L I T Y
Of Establishing
CONFESSIONS of FAITH,
CONSIDERED.

LETTER XVII.

Dear SIR,

HAVING, I hope, sufficiently made it appear, that your arguments in favour of the *right* of protestant churches to establish confessions—HUMAN, SYSTEMATICAL confessions—of faith, are utterly inconclusive, I come now to examine those which you have brought to shew the *utility* of such an establishment.

B

IN

IN pursuing this method I have done as *you* proposed in the beginning of your Third Letter. Let me observe, however, that this is no other than the method proposed and followed in the *Confessional*. That you should charge our author, therefore, with considering the utility *before* the right of establishing confessions of faith, must be matter of surprize to every one, who remembers, that the utility is formally considered, in answer to *Episcopi*, in chap. iii. *after* the right had been considered in the preceding chapter.

I GUESS your apology for bringing so groundless a charge, will be, that in the *first* chapter of the *Confessional* notice is taken of the utility, or however the success, of established confessions. But this could be only an handle for you, and cannot be admitted as any apology. That chapter, you very well know, is chiefly *historical*, not *argumentative*; exhibiting the *rise* and *progress* of established confessions, with a view of the ill success which, in *fact*, had hitherto attended them: And if the matter had been left there, would you not have said, That this historical
account,

account, however just, of the ill success of the *particular* confessions therein mentioned, was nothing to the *general* utility? especially as you are for *varying* confessions as oft as the inexpediency, or good effect, of the old ones should be perceived.* But see the very order observed in the Confessional, which you have charged the writer with neglecting to observe, nay, with *intentionally* reversing, in order, by “raising some
 “prejudices against the utility of confessions, to
 “gain a more favourable attention to his attack
 “on the right of enjoining them.”† For this piece of *disingenuity*, (for an *over-sight* it could not be) I have spared to reprove you, otherwise than by exposing the groundlessness of the charge, and shall leave you to your own reflections upon it, after reminding you once more, That the *general* utility is considered in a chapter for the purpose, and which doth not *precede*, but immediately *follows* that in which the claim of right is discussed.—Now to the question.—

* LETTERS, pag. 32, 34.

† Ibid. pag. 6.

YOUR first and main argument, its scattered parts collected and disposed, will stand thus—
 “ *There can be no edification in religious society,*
 “ *without uniformity of opinion—To obtain this*
 “ *uniformity, confessions of faith were established,*
 “ *having a suitableness to this end—THEREFORE*
 “ *they are useful.*”*

THIS sort of reasoning, in favour of subscription to human articles, takes its rise from a diffidence in the *original* principle of the reformation from popery, viz. “ a right of judging, every
 “ man for himself, of the sense of scripture.”†
 This principle left all protestants, as well considered individually, as collected into different societies, or churches, on a perfectly equal footing in the matter of religion. But, on this principle, a diversity of opinions was unavoidable. What then?—Was the original plan of reformation to be contracted?—Were the privileges of protestants to be abridged—the rights of the Christian church, so lately regained, to be again encroached

* LETTERS, pag. 68.—73.

† Ibid. page 13.

encroached upon, for the sake of uniformity?— Could any fancied inconvenience in a diversity of opinions, warrant the rulers of this world to controul the authority of the scriptures—to impede the course of the gospel—to forbid the people free access to the well of everlasting life—to close up the fountain which had been opened by the death of Christ, and by him left open to all believers—to deliver out the blessed water in their own scanty measures, or suffer it to be tasted only in the impure course it might take under their direction?—Or what imposition may not be justified on such a plea for restraining that liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free?— If God, our saviour, has granted us that privilege, of judging for ourselves of the sense of scripture, which the reformers, in withdrawing from the church of *Rome*, asserted, no man, no body of men, has a right, under the pretence of preventing bad consequences, to debar us, by *any method*, or in *any degree*, of that privilege. The plea of *utility* is not to be admitted here—And if the reformers, on finding their followers breaking into sects, began to fear for the consequence of
their

their own principle, adopted maxims inconsistent with it, and, in order to preserve or strengthen their influence over their respective followers, meditated a more narrow plan of conduct for them, than that which they had proceeded upon in their own case of separation, they certainly *so far* encroached on Christian liberty. You cannot justify them.—You ought not to have attempted it. Candour indeed might suggest an apology for them.—But an apology had been already made. It would not be wanting, when their conduct came (happily for their memory!) under the review of our author—so firm—so friendly, as he hath shewn himself to be, to the glorious cause they engaged in, and so tender, where obliged to touch the foibles and infirmities of those venerable fathers of the reformation.*

I HAVE thought it, Sir, not improper to present you with this view of the *origin* of your argument, before I proceeded to examine it more directly. You mean to argue on the maxims of the reformers—But it is only on *those* maxims, which

* CONFESSIOAL, pag. 19. 20.

which they adopted *after* they had emancipated themselves from the tyranny of *Rome*, not on those which *led* them to attempt their emancipation—maxims which they drew not immediately from scripture, (as they did their original principle) but took up, on a view of the external state of the reformed church. They saw her divided and become multiform in opinion. They would have her uniform. Uniformity in opinion, they *now* judged, would be expedient—was become necessary to any edification. In consequence of this new principle, scripture was to be interpreted in *one* sense; the *one* true sense to be *fixed* by themselves—fallible men—and, for greater precision, in other words than those of Christ and his apostles.* For the warrantableness, how-

* “ If (says Dr. *Rutherford*) the sense of scripture may be expressed more plainly, why not more *precisely*, than in the words of Christ, and his apostles?”——“ The governors of the church, have “ therefore, found it necessary to introduce what are called *new* and “ *unscriptural* words and expressions—to *fix* the sense, in which “ scripture-expressions are (to be) understood by those, who are “ candidates for the office of public teaching.” VINDIC. pag. II.

The Professor will excuse the liberty taken to *fix the sense*, in which his words and expressions, in the above citation, are only intelligible.

however, of such a procedure, they could not appeal to sacred writ.

THIS then I say, Sir ; that you have imposed upon yourself in this argument, by imagining that you must tread on safe ground in following the steps of the reformers ; seeing the reformers were but men : And though their *original* principles are undoubtedly solid, being founded in God's word, and therefore may safely be trusted to, yet we must not follow *them*, any more than other men, where their own judgment *only* would lead us.

I am,

S I R,

Your most obedient humble Servant, &c.

LETTER XVIII.

THE maxim, Sir, which appears at the head of your argument—*There can be no edification in religious society, without uniformity of opinion*—comes now under consideration. This, our author observes, was unhappily “ adopted by the reformers as *self evident* : And the observation is certainly just : For they could not appeal to scripture for the truth of such a maxim. It is not expressly upon record, among the sayings of our Lord, or in the writings of his apostles. They could not justly *infer* it from any general principle of scripture. It seemed equally incapable of being *deduced* from any principle of reason. Accordingly they attempted not a *proof* of it from either quarter. For our conviction of its truth, its own evidence was to suffice. As they left the matter, therefore, we have but to deny the truth of the maxim, to oppose our judgement to their authority, and to assert that *there may be edification in a religious society, without uniformity of opinion.*

C

But

But as you have undertaken to prove it, (it should seem, then, it is not altogether self-evident) we must examine what you have to say for it.

BRIEFLY, then, you rest its evidence on the following position—" *The true sense of scripture can be but one.*"—From hence, you say, it "immediately follows, That *there can be no edification in religious society, without uniformity of opinion.*"*

Now I shall not, at present, dispute the premise from which the maxim in question is inferred. Of that, let me only observe, you yourself seem to be somewhat doubtful, not venturing to admit it as true, without restriction to certain parts of scripture. You are not for "extending it to "prophecies, for instance, and such passages as "Dr. *Powel* is speaking of in the quotation, "note (1) p. 48. of the *Confessional*." But, true or false, and restricted to your own liking, the conclusion you would draw from it, is not valid; much less doth it "*immediately follow.*" If the true

* LETTERS, pag. 69, 70.

true sense of scripture can be but ONE, all that can be immediately concluded from hence, is—
*That of two, or more, senses put upon it, one, or more, must be false—All difference from THAT is error ; and, consequently, in a religious society, where any difference of opinion obtains, some person, or persons, must be in an error—*This may be allowed. This will follow. But what then?—
 Does it yet follow, that *there can be no edification in that society?*—We are not come in sight of any such conclusion.

AND I desire to know, what should hinder those members of the society, who are supposed to hold *erroneous* opinions, from edifying in company with those, who hold the *one* true sense of scripture?—Are they not full as likely to receive some instruction, to be better informed concerning the points wherein they err, and to be gradually led into the truth, by being allowed to join and continue in society with their fellow-christians, who are happily of a better way of thinking, as they would be, if excluded, or rejected from the society?—Would not this be to cut them off from

almost a possibility of edifying?—Would it not tempt them to cherish their errors?—Is it not laying them under the necessity of seeking edification in their own way, and to form themselves into a distinct society upon their own heretical principles?—In this way indeed they would have *uniformity* of opinion. And if that be so great a blessing to the church—so necessary to any edification in religious society, as you would conclude it to be ; then it will follow, that they may edify more in this new society, where *essential* errors in religion are *uniformly* professed, than among those, who maintain the *one true* sense of scripture.

BUT, “ the admission of professors of opinions
 “ believed to be erroneous, into a religious society,
 “ must just so far prevent the edification of that
 “ society, as a mixture of error with true religion
 “ does.”*—I deny it, Sir. To mix error with
 true religion can never tend to, but must needs
 prevent, the edification of that society, in which
 the error is established, just so far as it leads any
 from the truth. But professors of opinions be-
 lieved

lieved to be erroneous, by being admitted into a religious society, in which true religion, unmixed with error, is established and taught, may themselves be greatly edified, (perhaps converted to the truth) without in any degree preventing the edification of that society, and “ the good effects to be “ hoped for from preserving the purity of religion.”

HOWEVER, you perplex yourself here, and darken the matter, by changing the state of the case. The *admission* of professors of opinions *believed* to be erroneous, into a religious society, and what effect the admission of such may have upon the society, is not in the question; but, Whether in a religious society, the members of which are not uniformly of the same opinion, as to the sense they put on certain passages of scripture, Christians may not, such difference of opinion notwithstanding, receive mutual edification? And surely, Sir, they may edify one another. If not, what are we to judge of the great protestant society at large; or of any one of the numerous societies of which it consists?—Can there be *no edification*

edification in the reformed church, because it hath not uniformity of opinion?—Shall we say, that no good can come of a friendly intercourse between the differently denominated parts thereof? May not some advantage arise to the protestant cause, from a free communication, among the different churches, of each others sentiments—from mutual advice and exhortation in spiritual matters—from calm, considerate debates on any important points, and from decent remonstrances with such as affect rule and precedence, or manifest a narrowness of sentiment in doubtful disputations? I am sure much more good is likely to accrue to the common cause of protestants, as well as to our own establishment, from such a method of treating the differences which subsist among, and managing the controversies which divide protestants, than could be expected from any correspondence with popish doctors, on a *project for uniting us with a popish church, and that with concessions in favour of the grossest superstition and idolatry.**

AND

* It now appears with the fullest evidence, from a narrative, confirmed by authentic papers,

1. That

AND what must we think of our own church, if this maxim is to be admitted, that *there can be no edification in religious society, without uniformity of*

1. That archbishop *Wake* did correspond with certain doctors of the *Sorbonne*.

2. That he was *moved*, and that on the slightest hint from his correspondent, to enter upon a *project* of uniting the church of England with the French popish church.

3. That he was mighty fond of the project.

4. That he apprehended there wanted little else, towards the success of the project, than the removal of the French church from the jurisdiction of Rome; for that

5. He gave a very indulgent reception to the proposals contained in *Du Pin's Commonitorium*, wherein not *one* peculiar doctrine of the Romish church will be found to be fairly given up.

6. It doth *not* appear that he “never made any concessions;” on the contrary, some gross concessions, much to the disparagement of our establishment, do appear, particularly in one of his grace's own letters. (No. 8.)

Lastly, That, if an *instance* is wanting to prove his “offering to “give up, in order to promote the union, any one point of the “established doctrine and discipline of the church of England,” yet in almost every letter from his grace, there is proof, that he was not *averse* to giving up something of both, and effecting the union on a mutual approach of the two churches, as to points of doctrine—In *Mosheim's* words—*Pacem cum ecclesiâ Gallicanâ, salvo utriusque partis sententiis plerisque, facere voluit.*

See Appendix iii. to *Maclaine's Translation of Mosheim's Eccl. Hist.*

of opinion?—You that contend for a latitude in subscribing her articles must not pretend, that She is *uniform* in opinion. Can there, then, be no edification among us, because we are not agreed about the sense of our articles?—

PERHAPS you will say, we are agreed and uniform in *essential* or *important* matters, which is all the uniformity you plead for. But then you should inform us, which of the 39 articles are *essential* and *important*. Are not all the *doctrinal* articles of our church essential, or however important?—Are not the doctrines of, The *holy* and *undivided* TRINITY—*Justification* by *faith* ONLY—The *helpless* condition of man since the *Fall*—ORIGINAL SIN—*Unconditional* PREDESTINATION—essential doctrines?—If they are not *necessary* to be believed, it was *unnecessary* to establish them—And if they are *necessary* articles of belief, then you must allow that our differences of opinion are about *essential* and *important* matters; and consequently, according to your maxim, there can be no edification in *our* religious society.

Now,

Now, Sir, on the first of the abovementioned doctrines, the leading doctrine of our church, you want not to be informed, that some of our first-rate divines have held very different opinions. Dean *Sherlock* differs from Dr. *South*; Dr. *Wallis* widely from both; Dr. *Waterland* from each of the foregoing, though not so much from *South*, as from the other two; and Dr. *Clarke* totally from all four. Each of the five has had his adjutors and opponents, among the clergy—Each his followers and dissentients, among the laity.

NOR have the other articles above cited been considered *uniformly* in the same sense. The author of, *An Essay on Establishments in Religion*, has been hardy enough directly to impugn the doctrine contained in our Xth article:* And another anonymous writer of a book entitled, “*Three Letters*”—three times as large as your *fifteen* put together—“to the author of the Confessional,” owns, that “the *contrary* opinions charged on the 17th “ article, are not contained in it, but are conse-
D “ quences

* *Essay*, p. 118. We find this anonymous performance attributed by the *Critical Reviewers* to one Mr. Rotheram.

“quences drawn by different men from *different*
 “*parts* of it, which the article was not framed
 “to maintain but to *avoid**.” And yet, for his
 own opinion, you see how his principle of sub-
 scribing with *latitude*, bewilders the unhappy
 man; insomuch, that one can more certainly say,
 he is at a loss how to understand the article, than
what his sense of it may be.

WHAT shall we say now to this want of *uni-*
formity in our religious society?—That there can
 be *no* edification among us?—This difference of
 opinion, you will observe, is not in lesser matters
 only, but about the essential articles of our faith—
 articles, *necessary* to be believed; [and, conse-
 quently, concerning which, as you will have it,
 “the sense of scripture can be but *one*”. For
 otherwise you might bring yourself off by say-
 ing, as at page 109, that “the articles were not
 “agreed upon to avoid *all* diversities of opinion,
 “but only such as were thought *necessary* to be
 “*avoided*.” Unluckily, however, for your argu-
 ment, this want of uniformity is on points con-
 cerning

cerning which you affirm, “ but *one* of the different opinions can be true (as only *one* sense of scripture is true) and all difference from *that* is error*.” But I will venture to conclude against you, Sir, (and in so doing I have the suffrages of the most distinguished characters among us, and of all the candid part of my brethren) that, notwithstanding all our differences in opinion, there may be edification in the church, and that, if it be not our own faults, we may even avail ourselves, to some valuable and religious purpose, of a communication — a prudent and peaceable, yet frank and unreserved communication — of those very differences.

I am,

S I R, &c.

LETTER

* Letter, p. 70.

L E T T E R X I X :

Y O U have seen, Sir, that admitting the truth of the maxim with the restriction you have put upon it—"The true sense of scripture can be but one in *essential* articles"—it doth not follow from thence, that *there can be no edification in religious society, without uniformity of opinion*. Indeed it was not likely you should succeed in an attempt to prove against our author, that the reformers *happily adopted, as self-evident*, the above maxims. For how can they be *self-evident*, if they stand in need of being proved? The very attempt shews, that you are in reality of our author's opinion, *viz.* that the reformers ought not to have adopted them as *such*. If you are not, how absurd and ridiculous was it to go about formally to prove one *self-evident* position by deducing it from another.

HOWEVER, you lay down a maxim of *your own**, from which you promise yourself much better,

* Letter, p. 71.

better success in what you have undertaken to make out. You will engage for its being “ a “ convincing instance, that edification depends “ upon uniformity of opinion in important mat- “ ters.” The maxim is this—“ *The form of public “ worship must be regulated by the religious opinions “ of the worshippers.*”—What a maxim!—But hear one of a more protestant cast.— *The form of public worship ought to be regulated by the word of God, and not by the opinions of men.*—For the *word of God* is beyond dispute with protestants, the only safe rule, according to which we can hope to perform religious duties, in any manner that can be acceptable to almighty God. Church governors, in following *their own* judgment, fixing by systematical articles *their own*, as the *one true*, sense of scripture, and regulating the form of public worship thereby, may themselves be in an error: In which case the worshippers cannot be edified, “ unless (to use your own words) we “ can suppose, edification in religious society is “ to be obtained by mixing error with religion.*” Whereas if the word of God be strictly adhered

* Letter, p. 70.

to, in regulating the form of public worship, the edification of the religious society will not be obstructed "by error being mixed with religion."

NOR charge me here with an unfair substitution of terms. I know you don't expressly say, that the form of public worship must be regulated by the opinions of *Church-governours*, but by the opinions of the *worshippers*. But it is plain, that your meaning must be the same; unless you would shift the question. For our enquiry is concerning the utility of enjoining subscription to human, systematical articles of belief, and you here say, the form of worship "ought to refer to the *articles of our belief* *;" that must be meant of such articles as we are speaking of—articles contained in the *systematical* formulary, and established by *human* authority; or else, the question is lost.

BUT whoever is to regulate the form of public worship, the church-governours, or the worshippers; why may they not regulate it by the
word

* Letter, p. 71.

word of God alone, without making it refer to any human system of faith? Your objection is this; that different sects of christians could, in in that case, never unite in *one* form of worship*. An objection this, which, I should think, lies much more against your own plan—of regulating the form of worship by human systematical articles—than against mine. For a form of public worship, referring, on any important points of faith and doctrine, to an human system of theology, is not likely to be relished by any other sect of christians, than *that* which follows the sense of scripture, on these points, fixed by the system. Whereas, christians of different sects, if they value the scriptures as they ought, and unite in the fundamental principle of protestants—the right of interpreting scripture, every man for himself—may with consistency and great satisfaction, join in a form of worship, which, on all points of faith and doctrine, refers to scripture alone, or to scriptural expressions, and not to any particular sense fixed on them by *Man*. To try this matter in an instance mentioned by yourself—

* Letter, p. 71, 72.

WHAT is there to prevent christians uniting, "as to the object of their worship," when the article of belief concerning it, to which the form refers the worshipper, is expressed in *scripture-terms*?— In this case no handle is given for schism to any christians: Whatever be their difference of opinion about the sense of scripture, on the doctrine in question, that difference need be no obstacle to their joining in a form of worship, which refers not to any of their preconceived notions. But if the form refer to an article, or creed, which treats of the *God-head* systematically, specially defining the doctrine, and determining the sense of scripture thereon, but *one*, of the many different sects of christians, can possibly unite, with any satisfaction, in worshipping according to *such* a form.

IT is unnecessary to instance in any other points. What has been said on this *important* one, must be sufficient to convince us, that such a society as you speak of— *a religious society, composed of the different sects into which christians*
are

are unhappily divided * — would not so readily unite in a Form of public worship, regulated by *human* opinions, or “referring to systematical articles of belief”, which fix the sense of scripture-doctrines in scholastick terms, and by metaphysical distinctions, as they would in a Form, regulated by the *word of God*.

BUT after all, if we should allow that your maxim — “*The form of public worship must be regulated by the religious opinions of the worshippers*” — is defensible; yet how is it “a *convincing* instance, that edification in religious society depends upon uniformity of opinion in important matters”? — The worshippers are at best but *men*; and worshipping by a form, which refers to their religious opinions, on important points, they may be worshipping *uniformly wrong* — in a way unwarranted by scripture — under the influence of the grossest superstitions, like the church of *Rome* — or, in a whimsical,

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in

injudicious, fanatical way — or, according to a dull, insipid, unmeaning form. Now in any of these cases (and they are all very *supposable*, I will not say, *real* cases) does uniformity of opinion appear so necessarily connected with the edification of the worshippers? — Far from it. Edification in religious society does *not* depend upon any such uniformity (for then indeed the church of *Rome* would be entitled to our preference on this account :) But it depends much rather upon their worshipping—whatever differences of opinion be among them — and teaching, and exhorting one another, according to the plainest and most express directions of *God's holy word*.

I am,

S I R, &c.

LETTER XX.

Dear SIR,

HAVING shewn you, that the first maxim, on which you would ground your argument for the utility of subscription to human articles of faith — “*There can be no edification in religious society, without uniformity of opinion*” — is not just, at least not justly supported; I come now to speak to the second position in your argument — “*To obtain Uniformity of opinion confessions of faith were established, having a suitableness to this end*”: — And here you say;

“IT must not be forgot, that we consider confessions of faith only as abridgements or explications of scripture, and allow them no authority, otherwise than as we suppose them consonant to scripture”*. If so, what Uniformity of opinion could be proposed to be obtained by setting forth *such* confessions? — If no authority is allowed them, other-

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wise

* LETTERS, p. 73.

wise than as *we* suppose them consonant to scripture, then we are left, each of us, at liberty, for any authority in them, to enjoy that opinion which *we* suppose to be consonant to scripture, or to *reject* the opinions of the creed-makers, if *we* suppose them *not* consonant to scripture. Uniformity of opinion cannot be the end of setting forth confessions of faith with no other authority than this.

IN reminding us, therefore, that you would be understood to consider them only in this light, you flatly yield the question to the objectors against established confessions; seeing you give up all that authority to which they object. For they are not against abridgements or explications of scripture, as *such*; nor deny that they may have their use: Neither do they conceive any great harm can be done to the protestant religion, by any one or more churches publishing explicit confessions of their faith and doctrine, so long as those confessions are received and looked upon in no other light, than as testimonies to the world, what

tenets

tenets are held, what doctrines generally taught in those churches; without requiring assent and consent to them, as *tests* of *Orthodoxy*, or pretending to *fix* thereby the *one true sense* of scripture. Private judgement is not infringed upon by any man, or any body of men publishing their own confessions of faith: And so far is our author at least, from finding fault with any for doing this, that he has observed there may be circumstances, under which it may be *usefully* done; and even expressed his approbation of the conduct of the first protestants herein, while their public declarations of faith and doctrine, could be considered only in this light*.

BUT it is time to remind *you*, Sir, that we are considering confessions of faith in a very *different* light, *viz.* as established by human authority — as fixing, in important matters, the *one* sense of scripture — as drawn up in a *systematical* form, and *so* subscribed by the ministers of the church established, that scripture

* CONFSSIONAL, p. 4—6.

is to be explained to the people in no other sense, than in *that* fixed by the Formulary. This, Sir, is the sort of confessions we have to do with. For you will have it, that in essential and important matters the sense of scripture can be but *one*; and that, *consequently*, in religious society there can be no edification, without Uniformity of opinion; to obtain which uniformity, confessions of faith, you assert, were *established*.

HOWEVER, if *your own* account of the matter must be taken, this Uniformity, so necessary to any edification, was *not* the end of their establishment, in our church at least. For you say, "they were not agreed upon to avoid *all* diversity of opinion; but only *the diversities*, i. e. such as were thought *necessary to be avoided*"*; some doctrines, you observe, "are *designedly* left undetermined"†. You go farther, asserting that the articles, which are established, were not all intended to determine the sense of the very doctrines

* LETTERS, p. 109,

† Ibid.

they

they refer to, so as to secure an uniformity of opinion concerning them. "Not every article", say you, "was designed to be limited to one particular sense, even by the compilers, and consequently all diversity in *these* points was *never intended* to be avoided"* . You suppose also, that they who subscribed the articles, when they were first set out, "might *not* believe them to be true in one precise *uniform* sense", but might, consistently with the intention of the compilers in framing them, entertain *diversity* of opinions concerning them†. But what follows is astonishing.

You are not only for admitting *diversity* of opinions, on the sense of the 39 articles; but even think it defensible to subscribe them in senses literally and grammatically *contrary* to each other. Our author had asked, "If the wording of any proposition admit of two or more doctrines, or senses, and those doctrines may be literally and grammatically contrary to each other; how could they both or

* LETTERS, p. 109.

Ibid, p. 114.

“ all

“ *all be defended as most agreeable to the divine word*”? — Your answer is, not indeed immediately to the question, how this may be done? nor directly affirming, that it CAN be done; but however, that it may *consistently* be ATTEMPTED. “ Two contrary doctrines”, you maintain, “ may *consistently* be attempted to be defended by two different persons, *both* as most agreeable to the divine word; and this, when their *different* doctrines are expressed by the *same form* of words”*. — *Admit this subscription† to pass, and you render the act of none effect*”, says our author. — “ *Not so think I*”. — say you: “ For the two subscribers opinions [different and even contrary to each other] may be such, as the articles are CONTRIVED to admit; *viz.* both literal and grammatical senses of the *same form*”‡. Most flat and flagrant contradictions these surely!

BUT

* LETTERS, p. 122.

† SUBSCRIPTION to the *same* proposition in two *different*, and even *contrary* senses. See *Confess.* p. 169, 170, 171.

‡ LETTERS, p. 122.

BUT, Sir, it is not my desire to taunt you with your absurdities. They had not been so much as mentioned, if it were not necessary in the course of my argument so to do. My view in what has been adduced is only to convince you, that according to your *own account* of the design of our articles, they were not established "to obtain Uniformity of opinion".

NOR did confessions of faith *originate*, among Protestants, in any such design, or under an expectation, that they would operate to such an end, as the obtaining uniformity of opinion. Hear our author — "These circumstances laid the protestants under a necessity of publishing to the whole world explicit confessions of their faith and doctrine, authenticated by formal attestations of the leading members of their respective churches. That of the Protestant princes of *Germany* led the way; being solemnly tendered to the emperor *Charles V.* in the diet held at *Ausburgh* in the year 1530. This

precedent other Protestant states and churches thought fit to follow on different occasions; and by this means acquitted themselves, at least among all equitable judges, of the scandal of abetting the schismatical and seditious enthusiasts, who about that time infested different countries under the pretence of promoting reformation”*.

You have here, Sir, the original design of the first protestants in making publick confessions of their faith. This was not done with a view of bringing the various sects to an uniformity of opinion. Far from it. It was, on the contrary, to evidence to the whole world, how widely they *differed* from those sectaries, with whom they esteemed it the greatest disparagement to be reckoned *uniform* in opinion.

AND when afterwards the public confessions, in the several communions on whose behalf they were exhibited, received that

* CONFSSIONAL, p. 5.

authority, the expedience and utility of which you plead for — I mean, when an unfeigned assent to them, confirmed by subscription or a solemn oath, became an indispensable condition of qualifying men for the ministry—how were they suited in themselves, or how could those by whose authority they were set forth propose, by such means, to obtain Uniformity of opinion among the several churches and communions? — Was it likely, that any two of the differing societies should be the sooner brought to an unity, on any point of faith or doctrine, for that their respective pastors were required solemnly to abjure, each the others peculiar opinions? — While each church held its resolution, of enjoining its ministers to teach and maintain its own opinions in opposition to those of the other, declared false, unsound, heretical, there could be no prospect of an union. This expedient, therefore, for obtaining uniformity, and lessening the differences among protestant churches (but that the good providence of God over-ruleth Man's foolish and intem-

perate counsels) would effectually have perpetuated the differences to the latest ages.

I SPEAK not at present of other inconveniences, which may have attended the enjoining subscription to human confessions of faith, as tests of Orthodoxy. Your assertion — “ that they were established in order “ to obtain uniformity of opinion, and that “ they have a suitability to this end ” — is the point immediately under consideration: And that they have not *had* this effect — that they are not *suited* in their own nature — that they were not *intended* to produce this effect, either on the members of the same society, or on the differing societies themselves, will be obvious from the following concise view of your own observations, respecting these three particulars. I write for your conviction, Sir. To appeal to your own evidence on the case, seemed most likely to afford conviction. First then ;

1. WITH regard to the *Effect* which established

blished confessions have had in this and other free countries, you entirely agree with our author, as to the matter of fact — “ That
 “ there is scarce a year passes without
 “ bringing forth some new opinion, or re-
 “ viving some old one, with new circum-
 “ stances contrary to, or at least differing
 “ from the approved and Orthodox system;
 “ and, consequently, within the description of
 “ a gross and noxious error”*. Now may we not reasonably infer from this allowed fact, the *inutility* of established confessions, in respect of preventing diversity of opinions?

2. As to their *Suitableness* to produce an unity of opinion, you have owned that they may be understood in *different* — in contrary senses — that they may be so worded, that the subscribers to the *same* form may be of contrary opinions concerning the doctrine contained therein: If so, they cannot answer the end of their establishment, but are more suited to work strife and con-

* LETTERS, p. 99. — See also Confessional, p. 65.

tention,

tention, in the heat whereof men are less shy to bring forth their novel opinions, or abet those of others.

3. FOR the *Intention* with which they were established, this might be any thing rather than Uniformity of opinion, according to the view you have exhibited of the plan of our own establishment. For speaking of the *contrary opinions* above referred to, you assert, that they may be such as the articles are CONTRIVED to admit*. To shew that an entire uniformity of opinion was not the object of the first compilers of our articles, you produce the following instances from our author, viz. the points “concerning *Ori-gen’s* opinion of the temporary duration “of future punishments, concerning the sleep “of the soul, and likewise concerning the “real presence”. In these *not*, I should think, *unimportant* points of doctrine, you acknowledge a diversity of opinion was *not* intended to be avoided by the articles: And

* LETTERS, p. 122,

you

you add; "if more particular opinions than
 " one are allowed in one or two instances, why
 " should they not in others"*? — Why not
 indeed? — Why not in *all*? — Would it
 not have been equally consistent with charity
 and edification, if the articles, being drawn
 up in *scripture-words*, would without a forced
 construction have allowed every man his
 free opinion on *all* points of doctrine?

BUT you go on to argue against our author,
 and therein against yourself, that neither doth
the law require subscription in *one fixed* sense;
 whether we mean by the law the words
 of the statute, or the sense and *inten-*
tion of the law: For as to the first, you
 affirm, "that a man by the *outward* act of
 " subscription *fulfills* the statute, though he
 " should not in his own mind assent to one
 " of the articles": And for the latter — the
sense and intention of the law — "that being
 " to be taken from the *makers* of it, we may
 " argue", you say, "as we have done con-

* LETTERS, p. 110.

" cerning

“cerning the sense of the compilers, that
 “their opinions might be, and most likely
 “were different”*. What then is law, Sir?
 — Or how can it possibly operate so as to
 answer the end of established confessions;
 if that end be the obtaining of uniformity
 of opinion? —

BUT that they cannot possibly answer the
 end of uniting protestants, nor could be *intended*
 to unite them, as to the sense of scripture
 on important points of faith and doctrine, I
 appeal to another observation of yours, and
 with my remarks thereon shall conclude this
 long letter, and proof against the second
 position in your argument. The observation
 is this: That “confessions do not *create*,
 but only *exhibit* diversity of opinion”†.

Now it is not easy to conceive how uni-
 formity of opinion should be obtained by
 establishing confessions, which *exhibit diversity*
 of opinions. Is not this to establish the

* LETTERS, p. 110

† Ibid, p. 79.

diversity ? — You tell us, “ that our articles
 “ were not agreed upon to avoid *all* diversity
 “ of opinion, but only *the diversities*; i. e.
 “ such as were *thought necessary* to be a-
 “ voided”*. Be it so. — Then the opinions
 which were thought by *our* church ne-
 cessary to be *avoided*, would, on your maxim,
 be established in *another* society, as necessary
 to be *maintained*. According to you, the
 difference had certainly arisen, before the
 system of articles was framed. “ The want
 “ of unity was prior to the establishment of
 “ confessions, and was *the very cause* thereof”†.
 Then those protestants who differed from
 us in opinion might, with equal reason and
 propriety, have *exhibited* their opinions in a con-
 fession of faith, in order to prevent *the di-*
versities of opinion, which they esteemed
 necessary to be avoided; i. e. in this case,
 they might have established a set of articles,
 which should condemn the *essential* and *impor-*
tant doctrines of our church, our opinions there-
 upon being thought necessary to be *avoided*.

* LETTERS, p. 109.

† Ibid. p. 79.

The same reasoning will hold of all other differences in opinion, on *essential* and *important* points of faith and doctrine. For in *such* points it is you are for *avoiding* all diversity of opinion. But now, if such a want of unity among protestants must be *exhibited* in established confessions for the very purpose of *avoiding*, each church the opinions of the other from which it differs, confessions were not established to *unite* protestants—to lessen their differences—to obtain a greater degree of Uniformity; but, if not to *disunite*, yet certainly to *keep* them disunited—to leave the breach open—and by exhibiting *authoritatively*, to perpetuate and establish, the diversity.

I am,

S I R, &c.

LETTER XXI.

Dear SIR,

YOUR first and *main* argument for the Utility of established confessions of faith — grounded on the necessity of Uniformity in opinion to any edification in religious society, and on the *fitness* of established confessions for obtaining that necessary uniformity — being refuted; I come now to consider more briefly what you have farther said in their recommendation.

“THEY enable the people”, you think “to judge with more ease of the doctrines of their teachers — And thus they help to preserve the people from delusion”*. — If this can be made out, you have good reason to be dissatisfied with our author’s attempt to put the affair of subscription on another footing, than that of human, systematical

* LETTERS, p. 73.

confessions. But surely, Sir, the case is just
 the reverse of what you put it. For if the
 people are to judge of doctrines from the
 fixed formulary to which their teachers
 subscribe, then the more plain, simple, and
 unembarrassed with systematical terms the
 formulary is, with so much the more ease and
 certainty will they be enabled to judge of
 the doctrines contained therein: And the
 less that it contains of *man's* invention — the
 fewer of *human* resolves that are to be found
 therein — and the nearer the expressions
 come to the plain declarations of Christ and
 his apostles, so much the less danger must
 there be of delusion, to the people, and the
 more readily may they *know of the doctrine*
 of their teachers, *whether it be of God* — agree-
 able to his word — *or whether they speak of*
themselves — teach agreeably to any other au-
 thority than his word.

“BUT they can more readily and easily”,
 you say, “compare their teachers doctrines
 “with such short forms, than with the
 whole

“ whole tenor of scripture”* — Such short forms? — How do you mean, Sir? — Systematical explications of scripture cannot well be so short as the passages themselves are, to which they refer. And therefore in point of *Brevity* (if that must be reckoned an advantage in so important a matter) the utility of them is far from being obvious: Since the people may more readily and easily compare the doctrines of their teachers with articles, drawn up in the plain words of scripture, which must be agreeable to the whole tenor of scripture, than with human systems, which, after all, may not be agreeable thereto. But the *commodiousness* and *safety* of your method of trying doctrines by unscriptural forms has been fully considered in a former letter†.

You go on — “ They serve also as a rule
 “ by which church-governors may examine
 “ the principles of candidates for the mi-

* LETTERS, p. 73. † PART II. LETTER XV.

“ nistry,

“ nistry, before they commission them to
 “ exercise that important office ; and likewise
 “ as a form by which they receive the en-
 “ gagements of such candidates to adhere
 “ to their avowed principles in the execution
 “ of their ministry”*.— Whether they can
 answer that end ; or whether the attempt of
 church-governours to gain such an end by
 such means, be defensible on any other than
 popish principles, has been pretty largely
 considered in an *Examination* of Dr. Ru-
 therforth’s first *Vindication*. To that, and
 to our author’s compleat Answer to the Pro-
 fessor, in his *Preface* and additional *Notes*
 to the 2d edition of the Confessional, I beg
 leave to refer you, if you are really uncon-
 vinced, or can have so soon forgot what has
 been therein proved to a demonstration.—
 But thus, you say, “ they serve as a guard
 “ to prevent attempts by *false brethren* to
 “ destroy uniformity of opinion”. — Upon
 the Professor’s principle, I own, they would
 be an *effectual* guard to prevent the destruction

‡ LETTERS, p. 73.

of this same Uniformity — which seems to be all in all with the advocates for subscription; — seeing the candidate for holy Orders must have his judgement, and his conscience too, exactly conformable to the sentiments of the church-governors. There is much *conciseness* and consistency in his plan. Doth a candidate, on examination, betray any doubts of mind, or any scruples of conscience? — They are symptoms of disaffection to the Establishment. *Keep* him out. Has any, admitted a *Brother*, proved *false*? — *Turn* him out. — But they are no guard at all against *false brethren*, and their attempts to destroy uniformity of opinion, if, on your principle of subscribing with *latitude*, “two
“contrary doctrines may be attempted to
“be defended by two different subscribers
“to the same form”. But enough of this above*.

ESTABLISHED confessions of faith are of use, you farther alledge, “in specifying our

* At page 31, &c.

“ grounds

“ grounds of separation from the church of
 “ *Rome*, and, consequently, vindicating it in
 “ the eyes of impartial men”*. How can
 this be? — Do not protestants ground their
 separation from the church of *Rome* on this
 principle — “ That *every man has a right*
 “ *to judge for himself* of the sense of scripture,
 “ and the obligations he is laid under thereby” ?
 — This is a point on which you profess
 yourself ready to join issue with our author†.
 Now, may not this principle be specified
 without any human explications of faith
 and doctrine ? — Is it not sufficiently specified
 in your own words just now cited ? Do we
 stand in need of a council of Divines, to put
 it into systematical form and phrase ? — To
 say the truth in one word, the specifying the
 grounds of separation from the *Romish* church
 has nothing to do in our question, which
 relates to the specification of our belief
itself ; what it actually *is* ; not on *what*
grounds we believe with, or differ from, any
 particular church.

* LETTERS, p. 73.

Ibid. p. 13.

BUT

BUT as to "vindicating our separation
 " from the church of *Rome*"; it is most pre-
 posterously urged as an argument for the utility
 of requiring subscription to human systema-
 tical confessions of faith and doctrine. For
 in whose eyes will this vindicate protestants
 in withdrawing from that ancient Esta-
 blishment? — "In the eyes of impartial men",
 you say. — But who are the *impartial* men
 in this cause? — Are they Papists? — Are
 they Protestants? — Or neither, but Infidels?
 — The *Papist* may say — "Your separation
 " from us was *schism*, — Your claim of a
 " right to private judgement was a mere
 " pretence for making the breach. — Scarce
 " become independent on the church, you
 " meditate the like plan of authority, and
 " would justify that spiritual dominion over
 " others, the exercise of which over your-
 " selves you complained of and rejected: See-
 " ing, in your own churches, you require the
 " clergy to interpret the scriptures to the
 " common people according to a certain sense
 " fixed by a systematic formulary, any de-
 H " viation

“ viation from which is not warranted by
 “ law. What do *we* more than *you* in this
 “ case? — If the governors of your churches
 “ have a *right* to fix the formulary of faith,
 “ and to decree that the scriptures be ex-
 “ plained by the ministers of their respective
 “ churches uniformly in agreement there-
 “ with; our governors in council may *right-*
 “ *fully* decree, what system of theology they
 “ think fit, though it should tend ever so
 “ much to controul the judgement of the
 “ clergy in their interpretation of scripture”.

THIS the *Papist* might say: And how
 far the requiring subscription to unscriptural
 confessions can serve to vindicate our se-
 paration from *Rome, in the eyes of Protestants*,
 may be pretty fully understood from our
 Author, who certainly speaks the sentiments
 of every *impartial* and *consistent* protestant,
 while he objects and remonstrates against the
 imposition, and in the most spirited, yet
 decent, language that so pressing an occasion,
 so important a disquisition, seemed to require,

sets

sets forth the expediency and utility of a reformation on this head.

As to *Infidels*, if they are the only *impartial men*, in whose eyes the conduct of protestants in rejecting the authority of the *Romish* church, is to be vindicated; I am afraid the introduction of a formal subscription to human tests of Orthodoxy into protestant churches, may have no better effect, than to occasion their adding to their insults upon the professors of Christianity in general, the peculiar reproach of *inconsistency* on the part of *protestants*.

THE next use you find for confessions is; "That they will serve for a form to admit profelytes"*. — So will a *popish* confession serve for a form to admit profelytes from among protestants to the *Romish* faith. What a childish argument is this which you bring us to shew, that human, systematical confessions are preferable to plain, in-

* LETTERS, p. 73.

telligible, and undoubtedly scriptural ones!—
 Their serving for the admission of profelytes is
 of no use, but in proportion as they serve to ad-
 mit to a profession of faith, which is more pure,
 i. e. more scriptural and edifying, than that
 which the profelyte quits.

CONFESSIONS “are of use also”, you say,
 “as a rule to point out the principal ar-
 “ ticles of faith, and the particular duties
 “ incumbent on christians, to such as either
 “ want leisure, or skill, to compare one part
 “ of scripture with another, and so to form
 “ for themselves from thence a System of
 “ Christianity”*. — Fye, fye! — The Bible,
 Sir, the Bible is the book from whence *all*
 men should form for themselves a System of
 Christianity; or rather, it is the only System
 of Christianity, and no other can be formed,
 deserving of that name.

BUT “some want leisure, or skill, to com-
 “ pare one part of scripture with another

* LETTERS, p. 74.

“ for

“ for this end”. — And can such persons, let me ask, have *leisure*, or *skill*, to perform a much more difficult and dangerous task, *viz.* to form for themselves a system of christianity from *human, systematical* confessions? — Or, is it not possible, and more *useful*, to point out to such persons the principal articles of their faith, and the particular duties incumbent on them, in a plain, unsystematical form? — One should imagine, that, the less any christian is at leisure from his necessary occupations, and the plainer his understanding is, it is so much the more needful, that the principal articles of his faith, and his particular duties, be drawn out in a plain, easy and familiar manner; free from that perplexity and uncertainty, in which human systems of divinity, generally abounding in abstract terms and subtle distinctions, might involve him.

You proceed — “ They are of use like-
 “ wise as a public testimony of the tenets
 “ of our church, to acquit us of such ca-
 “ lumnies

“lunnies as our adversaries are ever ready
 “to throw upon us”*. — Far otherwise, Sir;
 if your notion of a *latitude* in subscribing
 the articles in *different*, and even *contrary*
 senses, be admissible. Two different sub-
 scribers to the same form are, according to
 you, warranted in preaching doctrines li-
 terally and grammatically contrary to each
 other, their contrary opinions being “such
 “as the articles are *contrived* to admit”†.
 Now, how can articles, or confessions, which
 are *so contrived*, serve as a public testimony
 of the tenets of a church? — Such a con-
 trivance much tend to throw obscurity there-
 on, and prevent the public from form-
 ing a clear judgement upon them. To give
 but one instance —

THE Creed commonly called, the Creed
 of St. *Athanasius*, is so worded, or (to use your
 expression) so CONTRIVED, as to have lead
 Dean *Sherlock*, and Dr. *South*, to entertain
 quite opposite notions concerning the God-

* LETTERS, p. 74.

† Ibid, p. 122

HEAD. The former asserts of the Three Divine Persons, that they are "*Three* real, "*substantial* Beings" — "*Three* distinct and "*infinite Minds*" — "SUBSTANTIALLY distinct" — "distinguished just as *Three* "*finite* and *created* Minds are, by self-consciousness"*. The latter denies, that there are "*Three* distinct, infinite *Minds* ; " alledging moreover, that such a notion " immediately and unavoidably infers *Three* "*Gods*"†.

BOTH these eminent divines of our church appeal to the *Creed* above-mentioned for the Orthodoxy of their respective opinions, and deny each the other's opinion to be the tenet of the Church of *England*. Since this is the case; Is it not evident, that the subtle definitions, and distinctions, as well as the *term* itself (a barbarous invention) have served to confound and darken not only the judge-

* VINDICATION of the Doctrine of the Holy and ever Blessed Trinity &c. p. 47. 66, 67 — London, 1690.

† ANIMADVERSIONS upon Dr. Sherlock's book, &c. Pref. p. 2. — London, 1693.

judgement of the people concerning the tenets of their own teachers, but that of the contending parties also — to excite much unprofitable debate and wrangling about words, — and instead of obviating, to give occasion to, “such calumnies as our adversaries are ever ready to throw upon us” on this subject? — So that I cannot but admire at your reckoning this among the uses of human, systematical formularies of faith and doctrine.

LASTLY; “They are of indispensable use”, you say, “to build an Ecclesiastical establishment upon”*. *An Ecclesiastical establishment?* — The church of *Rome*, Sir, is *an Ecclesiastical establishment*, and is built upon that kind of confessions you would recommend, *viz. human, systematical confessions*. Is this any recommendation of human systems of faith? — But tell me then; Upon what was the REFORMED church built? — Was it laid in *human Systems*? — Were they of *indispensable* use to build *this* church upon? — If

* LETTERS . 74.

so; they were ready to the Builders hands. But the Reformers thought them not, as you do, of *indispensable* use for their purpose. On the contrary, they looked upon them as *useless* and cumbersome materials; nay, as far worse than useless and cumbersome, as a *rotten* and *false* foundation, which accordingly they dug up and cast away, judging it necessary to lay the foundation *afresh*. The doctrine of Christ, as delivered by himself, his holy apostles, and the prophets, was, in their eyes, of *indispensable* use to build upon, and *alone*, without the aid of human systems, sufficient to support their church. Such is the foundation of the protestant churches; and indeed they all, with one accord, disavow the building their respective Ecclesiastical establishments on *any other* foundation.

IN supposing, therefore, that human confessions are of such indispensable use to build an Ecclesiastical establishment upon, you differ in opinion from every one of the pro-

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testant

testant churches fundamentally : And if you mean (for you seem to have *it* generally in your eye) to represent Our ecclesiastical establishment as built thereon, you must be told, that you misrepresent Our church — you discredit Her — and, though with more caution and coolness, are driving, whither the florid *Essayist*, and the irritated *Professor* at last, found themselves carried. Protestant churches, it is notorious enough, have framed various systems, and the Church of *England* has set forth *Her's*. But as She, in common with them, disclaims *infallibility*, so we must not consider it as the very Ground-work of Our establishment, or of such indispensable use, as that no part thereof may be removed without endangering Our *foundations*.

BUT I dwell too long on this futile recommendation of human, systematical confessions, as of indispensable use to build an Ecclesiastical establishment upon. I might have

have replied in one word, that, if confessions of faith are necessary for building an Ecclesiastical establishment, *plain* and undoubtedly *scriptural* confessions are of indispensable use to build an *edifying* and *Protestant* establishment upon.

I am,

S I R, &c.

LETTER XXII.

HAVING considered the several uses, which you have specified, of confessions of faith and doctrine, permit me, Sir, to remark, how vaguely and inconsistently you have treated this part of our disquisition, and encumbered it with much foreign matter.

THE question is concerning the *UTILITY* of requiring subscription to human, systematical confessions, or articles, of faith and doctrine. Now the *Utility* of any Institution doth not respect merely *the uses*, to which it may be made subservient; but the *profit*, or *advantage*, which results from the Institution. The *use* that has been made of established confessions, or to what *uses* they may be put, you have told us. We wanted not the information. We would know, whether the application of them to those uses you have pointed out, is conducive to the *real interest*, and *true advantage* of the church wherein they are established. Thus —

You tell us, that “confessions *serve* to testify, and to preserve *uniformity* of opinion”. They may serve to this end, if they be so worded, as to exclude all diversity of opinion. But this is no proof of their *Utility*. Because they may serve to testify and preserve an uniformity in *false* and *dangerous* opinions: In which case, they are not useful, but a
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discredit and detriment to the religious society, which sets them forth. So again— You tell us, that they serve “to examine candidates by—to prevent calumnies—to exclude from the church, or defeat the attempts of, *false*”, that is, *suspected*, brethren “—to build Ecclesiastical establishments upon”. You might have enumerated twenty more such uses for confessions. To what purpose?— Unless you could shew, that, in being used to those ends, they must center at last in this point, viz. the edification of the society in *christian knowledge and practice*. But alas! Christian knowledge and practice, in the promotion and furtherance of which *alone*, the Utility of confessions should be sought for, you have kept almost clear out of sight.

NOR is it only in this respect—in laying before us certain *bye* ends and uses of confessions, instead of illustrating their *ultimate* use, that is, their UTILITY—that you have clogged the question; but you seem also to have

have forgot, that the enquiry is into the *comparative* utility of confessions. For admitting that human, systematical confessions of faith and doctrine are of real utility; that is, are conducive in a *certain degree* to the grand end above mentioned, yet the question would still recur — Are not *plain* and *scriptural* confessions conducive in a *greater degree* to the same end? — Are they not more *extensively* useful — more *generally* accommodated to the capacities of christians? — In short; Are they not preferable, both for the *certainty* of their truth, and the *plainness* of their form? —

AGAIN — The subject of enquiry comprehends another very important and *essential* consideration, which you sometimes drop, sometimes resume, as suits your convenience; I mean — the establishing such confessions, as *tests of ORTHODOXY*, by requiring a solemn subscription thereto of candidates for the ministry. You set out with expressing the utmost dissatisfaction with our author for
at-

tempting to remove this *barrier of Orthodoxy*. You are for vindicating the right of church-governors, in point of *law*, of *equity*, and from *scripture*, to require subscription for *this end*. Thus you set out. But, when you come to plead the *Utility* of confessions of faith, you frequently shift the point in question, and would lead us out of sight of *subscription*, to view the articles contended for, as no more than *unimposed* explications of scripture, not enjoined by authority to be subscribed by the ministers, and taught the people, as containing the *only orthodox* sense of scripture, and, consequently, the least departure and variation from which the Church will not endure.

PERMIT me further to observe, that, in entering on the discussion of this part of our subject — the *utility* of confessions — you laid the foundation of your reasoning, in favour of establishing confessions, in this maxim, viz. “*that the true sense of scripture can*
“ *be but ONE, in the passages containing doc-*
trines

*"trines necessary to be believed, in order to
 "salvation"*.* From thence you immediately
 inferred, *the necessity of uniformity of opinion
 to any edification in religious society†.* Here
 then we had the end of subscription plainly
 assigned, viz. the security of the right faith,
 by fixing, in the formulary to be subscribed,
 the *one true* sense of scripture, and requiring,
 that the ministers explain the doctrines of
 scripture to the people, in that *one* sense, and
 in no other.

Now, if we are to look for the *Utility* of
 subscription in its suitableness to *this end*;
 then there can be no utility in a subscription
 which binds not the subscribers to an Uni-
 formity in opinion, on each of the articles
 which are established to exclude all diver-
 sity of opinion. Nay, it is not only an
useless institution, but even of the most *dan-
 gerous* implication; if, as you affirm, "the
 "admitting two or more senses of such texts,
 "as the articles refer to, be admitting the

* LETTERS, p. 69.

Ibid. p. 70.

“ necessity of professing two or more religions
 “ in order to salvation”*. Such, however,
 is the latitude in subscribing them, which
 you contend for; alledging (and having
 spent many pages to support the allegation)
 that the 39 articles of our church were
 not intended to be subscribed in *one uni-*
form sense, neither the compilers thereof
 being all of one opinion concerning them,
 nor intending to exclude all diversity of opinion
 in others†.

I am,

S I R, &c.

* LETTERS, p.70.

† Ibid, p, 108—120

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O B J E C T I O N S
TO THE
PLAN of SUBSCRIPTION
Proposed in the CONFSSIONAL,
CONSIDERED.

LETTER XXIII.

Dear SIR,

I COME now to consider the opposition, which you have formed to our author's *Expedient* for putting the affair of Subscription on a better footing, than it rests upon at present. — You begin with expressing your “wonder, that he should attempt to amend, “what he thinks altogether and absolutely “unlawful; when he has so frequently and “positively asserted, *That no protestant church “has any right to require subscription to “any human institution*”*. — The matter

* LETTERS, P. 145.

of wonder here is entirely of your own creating. You quite mistake our author. You misrepresent the design of his book. You charge him *foolishly* and *falsely*; and then express your astonishment at the *folly* of his attempt. For I call upon you — as you would exculpate yourself from the charge of disingenuousness — as you would shew the sincerity of your profession, that, in this correspondence, “*to come at truth is your*” “*ONLY wish*” — to mention but ONE of those *frequent* passages in the Confessional, where it is *positively* asserted by our author, *That no protestant church has any right to require subscription to ANY human institution.* Till this be done, you must allow us to look upon this, and such like representations of the design of the Confessional, to be unjust, invidious, and, by alarming the fears and jealousies of interested or bigoted churchmen, *injurious* to a cause, which (let me tell you) persons of the greatest eminence, and noted for their attachment to the church of *England*, have not been ashamed to plead.

THE truth is this; The enquiry proposed in the Confessional, is *not* concerning *any* human institution; but is restricted wholly to ONE human institution, viz. subscription to confessions of faith and doctrine; and is farther restricted in the *quality* of the confessions, and the *end* of establishing them, viz. *human, systematical* confessions imposed as *tests* of *Orthodoxy*.

So that our author doth *not* attempt, what you *wonder* at. He aims at an improvement of our ecclesiastical establishment in a *certain particular**. He doth not consider it as "*altogether and absolutely* unlawful". If he did, you might well wonder at his attempt. But he thinks well and honourably, I am persuaded, of many parts of Our Establishment; and wishes not, nor labours, as you are ever insinuating, for the
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* "THE equitable reader will recollect, that my subject leads me only to *one* particular, the case of Subscription to *human* Creeds and Confessions, and other ecclesiastical forms, which are required to be assented to, as being *agreeable to the word of God*". Confessional, p. 377.

destruction thereof, but for its *reformation* only.

WILL you tell me, “that subscription is
 “the very essence of this establishment, and,
 “therefore, in proposing to abolish subscrip-
 “tion, that he, in fact, proposeth the sub-
 “version of the establishment itself”? — My
 reply is; “That he doth not propose the
 “*Abolition* of subscription, but only, an
 “*Expedient* for putting it on a *better* foot-
 “ing”. — He appears not averse to re-
 taining subscription. And for this I appeal
 to your own words. After reciting the De-
 clarations proposed to be made by the can-
 didates for the ministry, you add, — “And
 “our author acknowledges in Chap. VIII.
 “*that he who scruples not making these de-*
 “*clarations and promises, cannot scruple SUB-*
 “*SCRIBING them*; — We may therefore”, con-
 tinue you, “I suppose, without offence, call
 “these SUBSCRIPTIONS”*.

* LETTERS, p. 146.

BUT

BUT then you will have it, “ that the subscription which our author admits, is to “ an human institution — to human forms “ — to confessions in unscriptural words”*. What quibbling is this, Sir! We know that, what our author proposes to be declared [or subscribed] by candidates for the ministry, is to be conceived in some *Form*, which, whether it consist of *his own* words, or the words of Our church, no one will deny is, in that respect, an *human* Form; and, if established by the church, becomes an *human* Institution. But is he for requiring assent to any human, systematical form of FAITH? — Are the articles of *faith*, to which, by a solemn declaration, or subscription, the candidate is to testify his unfeigned assent and consent, of human authority? — And are they also drawn up in a systematical form? — Is scripture interpreted therein, and the sense of it fixed by men? — And is that interpretation, and fixed sense, systematically expressed? — We are not concerned about

‡ LETTERS, p. 145, 146.

the form to be subscribed, any more than about the *mode* of subscribing it; whether the candidate should be required to write his name on paper, or on parchment. We are concerned only about the form of FAITH and DOCTRINE, to which the form subscribed testifies assent given. And whether our author, in the Expedient proposed, is for requiring the candidate's assent to an human, systematical form of FAITH and DOCTRINE, may soon be known by inspecting the Expedient itself: Which is, that the candidate make, or subscribe, the following declaration —

“ THAT *he is persuaded that the HOLY SCRIPTURES contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ; That he has determined by God's grace, out of the said SCRIPTURES, to instruct the people committed to his charge, and to teach nothing (as required of necessity to eternal salvation) BUT THAT which he shall be persuaded, may be concluded*

*cluded and proved by the SCRIPTURE***.

SUCH is the Form in which, according to our author's plan, the subscribing minister testifies his FAITH. Now, in subscribing this Form, doth he testify his assent to any human form, or system, of FAITH and DOCTRINE? — He doth not, Sir. He testifies his assent to *that* form of *faith* and *doctrine*, which Christ, and his apostles, and the holy prophets have delivered to mankind. By such subscription he is not tied down to teach according to any *human system* of Theology. Here is no imposition on the conscience, or on the understanding, of the *christian* candidate, by *fixing* for him the one sense of scripture: In short, it is not to an human system, or confession, of *faith* and *doctrine*, to which our author is for requiring subscription

* CONFESSIOAL, p. 382. THE remainder regards only the candidate's engagement to behave in an exemplary manner, and particularly to *conduct* himself with propriety, fidelity, and diligence, in the discharge of the pastoral office.

scription; unless the BIBLE can be reckoned among *human systems*. For to no other system of faith and doctrine, nor to any human explication of the same, is a candidate, by this Expedient, required to testify his assent.

I am,

S I R, &c.

LETTER XXIV.

SIR,

OUR author's expedient, the nature of which was illustrated in my last, is farther objected against, as being "far too comprehensive to answer the ends of subscription. — It would not exclude one papist from our ministry; since they [the papists] *refer to scripture ultimately for ALL*

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"their

"*their tenets*"*. — Do they so? — It is a circumstance in their favour I have been hitherto ignorant of. I had imagined, that for *some* of their tenets they might refer only to *Tradition*, and, for *all* their tenets, *ultimately* to the authority of their own Church — that on *this* authority they ground their security of being in possession of the only just interpretation, or the *one true* sense, of scripture — that on *this* they rest the truth of their peculiar doctrines, such as *Transubstantiation, Purgatory, Praying to and for dead men*, under a supposition of their being *alive* in what they call an *Intermediate state, Justification by works, &c.* — in short, that, for papists, the POPE in council is *ultimately* to decide on points of faith and doctrine, and that to place Scripture above any earthly tribunal, and allow the Word of God alone to decide authoritatively, in matters of conscience, is the distinguishing privilege claimed by *protestants*, and so gloriously asserted against the papists at the Reformation.

* LETTERS, p. 146.

BUT pray, Sir, consider in what light this objection of yours to the comprehensiveness of our author's plan, places the Establishment of which we are members. Referring us ultimately to *scripture*, you say, his Plan will not exclude one papist; because the papists for all their tenets refer ultimately to scripture. And is it thus, then, *viz.* by *not* referring ultimately to scripture, that Our establishment is such an effectual barrier against popery? — A fine apology truly for the church of *England*! A most honourable plea for the retention of her systematical forms! — The most bitter sarcasm her adversaries can throw out against Her, let me tell you, cannot equal the reproach, which this weak objection to putting subscription on a more scriptural footing, casts upon Her.

HOWEVER, I can well perceive, that the expediency of excluding papists is not the main object of your plea for continuing our present forms. No: The striking objection to alterations on the broad bottom of

scripture, is this* ; that “ hardly any of the
 “ numerous sectaries of the *reformed* church
 “ would in that case be excluded, since
 “ they plead scripture-authority also, and con-
 “ sequently might crowd into our mini-
 “ stry” — *Hinc illæ lachrymæ !* But, on the
 other hand, what pity, that their very plea
 for the authority of sacred writ, should be
 thus unfriendly turned against them, and be
 brought as a strong objection to admitting
 them into our society, and, consequently, to
 a share of the *general benefit* proposed by
 subscriptions !

I am,

S I R, &c.

* LETTERS, p. 146.

LETTER XXV.

YOU ask, Sir, “Whether such a subscription, as this proposed by our author, be not as liable as a larger form, to the objections he urges against a larger form”? — We have seen the Form, in which our author proposes, that a candidate for the Christian ministry testify his *Faith*, and what he will make the only rule of his teaching. It is not a LARGE Form, to be sure. However, I don’t remember, that it is recommended to us for its *brevity*; or that “our author urges any objections against larger forms”, merely for their being LARGER. His objections lye against *such* Forms, as contain points of faith and doctrine, *decided by human authority*, and *systematically* set forth: But the form, proposed in the Confessional, doth not bind the subscriber to submit his judgement, on any points of faith and doctrine, to any man, or any body of men, but to the authority of Christ only;

only; setting forth *the scriptures* at large, as the only rule of his faith and teaching.

BUT "may not the Quaker", you ask, "or any other Enthusiast, who thinks he has *inspiration, immediate revelation, or the light within*, as lawfully complain of being "tied up to take scripture for the rule of teaching, as a Confessionalist can now complain"*? — I don't well understand, what you mean by, "*lawfully complaining*". There is no *Law*, that I know of, to restrain the one, or the other, from *complaining*, when he thinks himself aggrieved. But if you mean, that the one may, with *as much reason*, complain of being "tied up to take scripture for the rule of teaching", as the other may complain of being tied to an human system of theology for the rule of *christian* teaching, you must be greatly prejudiced in favour of human systems to judge so. Because these may be wrong, contain false explanations of scripture, or be drawn up with

* LETTERS, p. 150. *and mean to show*

an interested view, to serve certain purposes of a secular nature: Whereas, the *Word of God* is ever true, certain, and without deceit: and, consequently, as professed christians, those cannot *reasonably* complain, who are left at liberty to teach the way of salvation, as it is manifested in the *Word of God*: And no greater liberty doth a Confessionalist plead for or desire. If therefore, the other complain of being *tied up*, as you call it, by *scripture*, he complains, as a DEIST, and, as such, is not to be regarded in our question.

BUT a word with you, Sir, by the bye, concerning this same Quaker, whom you have thought proper to introduce here, not without stigmatizing him with the name of an *Enthusiast*, for thinking he has *inspiration*, *immediate revelation*, or *the light within*. — Pray, Sir, let us give good words. It more especially becomes us so to do, and to forbear throwing out this term of reproach against others; remembering our solemn pro-

profession of trusting, that “ we were *inwardly*
“ *moved* by the *Holy Ghost*, to take upon us
“ the office of ministring in the church”.
Was it ENTHUSIASM, jointly with the Bishop
on our bended knees, *to invoke the Holy*
Ghost to COME and INSPIRE our souls —
to LIGHTEN them with CELESTIAL fire —
and enable them with perpetual LIGHT? —
Or, what thought we of *Inspiration*? when
the Bishop, after the above solemn Invo-
cation, and a Prayer, with the Priests pre-
sent, laid their hands severally upon the
heads of every one of us that received the
order of Priesthood; we the receivers hum-
bly kneeling upon our knees, and the Bi-
shop saying — “ RECEIVE the *Holy Ghost* for
the office and work of a Priest in the church
of God, now committed unto thee by the im-
position of our hands*. *Whose sins* THOU dost
for-

* SEE the office of Ordination of Priests.

His grace the late Archbp. of Canterbury, in his IN-
STRUCTIONS to Candidates for Orders, observes, that these
words — *Receive the Holy Ghost* — “ were used by our
Saviour to his apostles, immediately after he had said, as my
father

forgive they ARE FORGIVEN: And whose
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father hath sent me, even so send I you. God gave not the spirit by measure unto him: And he was able to bestow what measure he pleased, both of spiritual Gifts and Graces, upon others. He meant however", adds his Grace, "by this Benediction to confer *only the Ordinary ones*" — It is to be lamented, that we were not favoured, in this Prelate's lifetime, with a work of such great importance to the Clergy of the Church of England. For my own part, I would not have neglected, nor delayed, with all humility to have requested of his Grace, that he would be pleased to inform us, *on what authority* from scripture, so momentous an assertion, as this, was made. It is but too common, by way of defending articles established by human authority, to explain them *away*. If his grace, however, had contented himself with *instructing* candidates for Orders, that this Benediction — *Receive the Holy Ghost* — was not to be considered, in our days, in any other light, than as *conferring* only the ORDINARY gifts and graces of the spirit, or as *conferring nothing* upon the candidate; such a refinement, upon this part of the Ordination office, might have passed for its current value with those church-men, who think that *refinement* may sufficiently answer the end of *reformation*. But whatever liberty we take, in applying passages of scripture to Christians since the apostolic times, surely it becomes us to be very cautious, what *distinctions* we make about the Holy Ghost, and the gift thereof, as received by the apostles themselves. However common it be to distinguish between the ORDINARY and

sins THOU dost retain, they ARE RETAINED”*

and

and EXTRAORDINARY gifts of the spirit, there appears not the least foundation for any such distinction in the passage, to which the words in question refer: *As my father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them; Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* — If this Benediction doth not imply in it some extraordinary gifts, which the apostles were to receive, I cannot understand the difference between the words Ordinary and Extraordinary.

See *Secker's Eight Charges and Instructions*, p. 340.

* “These again”, saith the above cited prelate “are the words of Christ to his apostles, immediately after the former” — *Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* “But he did not grant to them the power, either of retaining the sins of penitent persons, or of forgiving the impenitent. Nor do we pretend to grant, by uttering them, all the Powers, which the apostles had in this respect”. — Is any power then, I would ask with submission, pretended to be granted to the candidate in this respect, viz. of retaining and forgiving sins? — His grace mentions two instances of the efficacy of these words, when pronounced by the bishop. “When we use them, they give you, first, an assurance, that, according to the terms of that Gospel, which you are to preach, men shall be pardoned, or condemned”. — But do not those words give equal assurance, whether they be pronounced by a Bishop, a Deacon, or even a Layman? — This is no proof of any power being given to the Priest of retaining or forgiving sins. “Secoudly”, says his grace, “they give you a Right of inflicting ecclesiastical

— and this pronounced, “ *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*”.

I am,

SIR, &c.

Ecclasiastical Censures for a shorter or longer Time, and of taking them off; which, in regard to external communion, is *retaining or forgiving offences*”. But is it *retaining or forgiving sins*? Is the taking off an Ecclesiastical censure, which which had been inflicted, for instance, upon an adulterer, to *forgive* the man his *sin*? — Surely not! God *alone* forgiveth sin, and he forgiveth it through the man Christ Jesus *alone*, and of the same, *assurance* is given, and that, to all Christians, by the Gospel *alone*. — As to the Right which, his Grace asserts, is, by uttering the Words — *Whose sins, &c.* — given to the *Priests*, “of inflicting Ecclesiastical censures “for a longer, or a shorter time”, I care not to question it. But since it is asserted, that such “a power is inherent in the Priesthood”, may I not ask without offence, whether Priests may exercise this Power according to *their own discretion*; under what circumstances, and in what degree, *they* shall judge meet for the Edification of the Church? — See *Sacker’s Eight Charges, &c.* p. 341, 342.

LETTER XXVI.

YOUR next objection, Sir, to our author's catholic Expedient, is as follows — "May not any person, who has not had time and opportunity to examine carefully what is urged, or may be urged, for the authenticity of the scriptures, as well complain of being obliged to give his assent to scripture, and make it the rule of his teaching, as Confessionalists can now complain" * ? — Let me answer this question by asking another. — Does our author in his Plan propose, that any one, who has not had time and opportunity to examine carefully into the authenticity of the scriptures, shall *be obliged*, as you term it, to give his assent to scripture ? — If he doth not, (and you know he doth not) Why do you introduce that as an objection against his Plan, which is no part of his proposal ? —

* LETTERS, p. 150, 151.

You

— You “fancy it possible to happen, that
 “a person in the 23d or 24th year of his
 “life, may not have had time and oppor-
 “tunity to examine carefully into the au-
 “thenticity of the scriptures”*. — Is this
 an objection to requiring such a person’s assent
 to scripture? — With how much greater
 force then may it be urged, against requiring
 his assent to *human, systematical* explications
 of scripture-doctrine! — For if, arrived only
 at that age, the candidate has not had time
 and opportunity to examine, with sufficient
 care, into the authenticity of the scriptures,
 whether they be the word of God; how
 has he had time and opportunity, over and
 above, to examine, whether the human
 System, proposed to his belief, be agreeable
 to the scriptures? —

You farther object; That “he may not yet
 “so carefully have examined the full import,
 “and obligation, of the promises in the Or-
 “dination office, as to know, whether he

* LETTERS, p. 150, 151.

“can comply with them *all* or not”*, —
 And why then would you require of *so*
young a candidate, subscription to much *larger*
 forms, than that which our author has
 extracted out of the Ordination office? —
 Why *allow* him (as you say, *oblige* him)
 at that age to make *more* promises — to en-
 ter into more extensive engagements — in
 short, to subscribe to our *whole* system, tho’ he
 has not yet, you suppose, “so carefully
 examined the full import of the promises
 he makes but in *one part* thereof, as to know,
 whether he can comply even with them or
 not? —

BUT of the promises which the candidate
 for orders, according to our author’s proposal,
 is to make, you would have done well to
 observe, that our question has respect only
 to *one*, viz. that which regards *faith* and *doc-*
trine. And if the *full import* and *obligation*
 of a promise “to instruct the people, com-
 mitted, to his charge out of scripture, as

* LETTERS, p. 150, 151.

“ containing sufficiently all doctrine required
 “ of necessity for eternal salvation, through
 “ faith in Jesus Christ, and to teach nothing
 “ (as required of necessity to eternal sal-
 “ vation) but that which HE shall be per-
 “ suaded, may be concluded and proved
 “ by *scripture*”; I say, if the full import, and
 obligation, of such a promise is not suf-
 ficiently obvious to a christian candidate, so
 that he may soon know, whether he can com-
 ply with it, or not, I know not any promise,
 regarding religious matters, whose full import,
 and obligation, he would be able to compre-
 hend. This I am sure of, that no promise can be
 conceived in words less ensnaring to con-
 science, or importing a more reasonable obli-
 gation, than what a Christian minister is hereby
 laid under.

I am,

S. I. R., &c.

LETTER XXVII.

Dear SIR,

YOUR Question* — “How will our author prove the authenticity of scripture, and consequently that it is more than “of human authority”? — deserves not an answer. That the scriptures are the word of God, is all along taken for granted by both sides in the present controversy. The Deist, if the dispute was with *him*, might, with some propriety, put such a question. But our author's Plan is proposed to *Christians*, and *Protestants*, who profess to receive the scriptures, as the word of God: And in that light, *viz.* as *Christians*, and *Fellow-protestants*, you can have no doubt, he regards you, and all his opponents from the same quarter; whatever gross inconsistency with that profession you have, in the course of the argument, but too plainly manifested; whether from a long

* LETTERS, p. 151.

attach-

ment to systematic forms; an apprehended interest in the retention of them, or, I am more willing to suppose, a sincere, but certainly, a very weak belief, that they are a necessary security of the true catholic faith.

WITH as little pertinency and propriety you again ask, "How the ecclesiastical, or "civil power, should come by the right of "demanding this assent to scripture, and "answers to these questions in the Ordination-office"? — For this is still to question us on the foot of *infidelity*, or however *scepticism*. But, if you mean only to ask us, how the governors of *christian*, and more particularly of *protestant* churches, might more reasonably demand the assent of candidates for the ministry to those answers, than to such confessions of faith, as are objected to in the Confessional; we can give you entire satisfaction on that head, by observing, that an assent to those answers leaves the candidate in the full enjoyment of his privilege as a

* LETTERS, p. 151.

Christian, and a *Protestant*, and the Church-governors without a pretext for lording it afterwards over the faith of the Clergy; Since, in requiring subscriptions to the Answers referred to, they demand not assent to *any one human* article of *faith*. If they did, what you observe would be as much to the purpose, as it is just, *viz.* that “ if
 “ any person, or persons, have a right to
 “ require subscription to *any one* article,
 “ which *they* think is a reasonable security
 “ to the society; they must have an equal
 “ right to require subscription to as *many*
 “ as they think reasonable for the same
 “ end”*. This reasoning, I say, is extremely just; but it is altogether inapplicable to our author. For he doth not propose, that church-governors require subscription to *any one* article of faith, which *they* may think a reasonable security to the society. That would be as great a stretch of church-authority, as one can well imagine. He pleads for a subscription to those articles *only*, which

* LETTERS, p. 151.

Almighty God has fixed in his word — fixed, as a full and sufficient rule of faith to every christian society — fixed, to the preclusion of all authority in Church-governors, to set forth *any* one article of faith, which *they* might think a reasonable security to the society.

BUT let us see how this reasoning would apply to *your* plea for subscription to human forms of faith and doctrine. You make church-governors the judges of the one true sense of scripture. This you allow them to have a right to *fix* in a formulary of their own, and to require subscription to the same of every candidate for the office of teaching in their church. If then they have a right to establish *any one* system of faith, which *they* think is a reasonable security to the society, they must have had an equal right to have established *any other* system, which they might have thought reasonable for the same end: Or, which comes to the same thing, the governors of every other church

must have an equal right to establish, and require subscription to, *any other system* — to *as many* articles as *they* think a reasonable security to the respective churches over which they preside.

IN arguing thus, how can you avoid the following consequence — *That the Claim of the Romish Church, of an authority to establish her system of faith or explication of scripture-doctrine, is as justly founded, as that of the church of England, to establish her's?* — Or can you, coherently with the principle on which the above reasoning depends, accuse the former of usurping an authority over men's consciences, in demanding of her Clergy an assent to any human explication of scripture (*Transubstantiation*, for instance) which She thinks a reasonable security to the society, while you allow the governors of a protestant church, the right of demanding assent to any human, systematic explication of scripture-doctrine, to be held and taught as that *CATHOLIC faith, which except every one doth*
keep

keep whole and undefiled, without doubt be shall perish everlastingly? — Look about you, Sir ; and consider the situation in which such sort of reasoning places you. Suppose yourself pushed with this question by a Papist ; I am persuaded, he would have the advantage over you. There is no other way of keeping our advantage over the papists, than firmly to adhere to our Original principle, as protestants ; in other words, to disclaim all human authority to decide for us, in matters of faith and conscience, and submit ourselves herein wholly to the authority of God's Word.

BUT you step in here to plead, upon our author's enlarged plan of subscription, for your favourite scheme of allowing candidates to subscribe to our present forms of faith with *latitude*. You ask : “ Why latitude in subscription may not as well be allowed under “ the *present establishment*, as in our author's “ *new modelled one* ” ? — I answer, that our author doth not propose *his Form*, (which
you

you call a *new modelled Establishment**,) to be subscribed with *latitude*. If he did, I should have as great an objection to his proposal as to your's. I could not justly blame you for supposing, that the compilers of our articles understood them in different senses, and also intended others should do so too†; and yet justify our author in compiling an equivocal Declaration, with an intent that it should be understood by the subscribers thereto, in different and even contrary senses.

No, Sir. The *Form* of words, in which our author is for having a candidate for the Christian ministry declare his faith, and, if you will, subscribe to, is not capable of that difference, and even contrariety of senses, in which you say two subscribers may understand our present forms‡. The candidate,
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* VERY improperly so called, if scripture itself be of more *antient* date, than any established formularies, which pretend to fix the sense thereof. For *Scripture* is the *model* of faith and doctrine, proposed in the Confessional.

† LETTERS, p. 109, 110.

‡ Ibid, p. 122.

according to our author's plan, declares expressly his belief or persuasion, "*that the holy scriptures* [the Books of the Old and New Testament, generally received among christians] *contain sufficiently all doctrine, required of necessity for eternal salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ*". — Now can a person subscribe this Declaration in *two* or *more* senses? If he can, what will subscription to any form whatsoever avail, as a test of the principles of a teacher? —

THE candidate further declares "*his determination, out of the said scriptures, to instruct the people committed to his charge, and to teach nothing (as required of necessity to eternal salvation) but that which he shall be persuaded, may be concluded and proved by the scripture*". — And is not this Declaration also clear, and determinate? — Can you find other words, which might more precisely fix and ascertain the sense of it? — Or is it possible, that different candidates should understand, and subscribe to it, in different senses

senses — in any sense but one? — It is not possible. The sense of the Declaration is *fixed*; the meaning and signification of the words, in which it is conceived, being clear, precise, and unequivocal. And, therefore, to your question — “Why an *equal* latitude” may not be allowed in subscribing our present forms” — I answer, that would be to allow *no* latitude. For if the sense of each of the 39 articles of the Church of *England*, be as fixed and determinate, as the sense of the Declarations, compiled from the Ordination-office, it certainly is so clearly fixed, as to exclude *all* diversity of opinion about the meaning of any of the articles subscribed.

BUT we are, at present, considering the Utility of subscription to human articles of faith, as it gives *security* to the society, that sound doctrine shall be taught the people. And how can you plead for such a latitude in subscribing our present articles, without spoiling your whole plea for the *necessity* of
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establiſhing them, or any *expediency* of requiring ſubſcription thereto. What neceſſity, for inſtance, for eſtabliſhing the doctrine of the TRINITY, if the ſubſcribing miniſter be left at liberty to teach ARIANISM? — Why require him to give his unfeigned aſſent and conſent to the article relating to PREDESTINATION, as a *ſecurity* to the ſociety of his preaching nothing inconfiſtent with that doctrine; and yet allow him to preach up ARMINIANISM? — Or why inſiſt on *ſecurity* being given by the candidate, that he will teach and maintain the doctrine of juſtification by faith *only*, if, conſiſtently with his ſubſcription, he may believe, and preach up the neceſſity of *works* thereto? —

IN ſhort; Is not ſuch a ſcheme of ſubſcription, to ſuppoſe, that you come under a ſolemn obligation to teach and explain the ſcriptures according to a *certain rule*, according to *one fixed ſenſe*, on the above-mentioned important doctrines, *viz.* the ſenſe fixed by the *articles* of the Church, at the ſame time that the ſub-

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ſcription

scription is supposed to imply no such obligation, leaving the candidates to follow, each his own judgement, in explaining the scriptures, as fully as if no subscription had been demanded* ? —

To

* ARCHBISHOP *Secker*, in his first Charge to his Clergy, appears to be so sensible of an obligation laid upon the Clergy by their *Subscription*, that he thinks it not *sufficient* to admonish them of their duty to teach the principles of the Gospel, *as the Truth is in Jesus*: He also charges them to be assiduous in teaching the Gospel, “as it is taught by the Church, of which they are members; as you have engaged”, continues he, “by your *Subscriptions* and *Declarations*, that you will teach it yourselves. You must preach to them *Faith* in the ever blessed *Trinity*”. — “You must set forth the *original* Corruption of our Nature; our Redemption, according to God’s eternal Purpose in *Christ*, by the Sacrifice of the Cross; our Sanctification by the influences of the Divine Spirit; the *Insufficiency* of our own good works, and the *Efficacy* of *Faith* to Salvation”. SECKER’S Eight Charges, &c. p. 235, 236.

THAT his grace thought Subscription to articles of religion of a more *obligatory* nature, than my Correspondent, one while, seems willing to allow, is further evident from his “*Instructions* given to *Candidates* for Orders AFTER their “*subscribing the Articles*”, which he opens with the following admonition to the Subscribers, concerning the solemnity

To conclude: Be but consistent with yourself, Sir, and you will find reason to retract this objection. Review all your objections with impartiality, and you will perceive, that they cannot be allowed any weight against our author's Plan, without a proportionable allowance in favour of *Popery*; or that they will make equally against *any* attempt towards a farther improvement of Our ecclesiastical establishment.

I have done. It is your part, Sir, to accept kindly, and to consider coolly, what has been offered on this subject in compliance with your request. So just and reasonable

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solemnity of their Engagement. — “ *Gentlemen*, You have
 “ now made the Subscription, by law required. And as,
 “ in so doing, you have acknowledged the Liturgy, and
 “ Articles, of the church of England, to be agreeable to
 “ the word of God; I hope you will think yourselves bound,
 “ as you *are*, to be careful, that the Instructions which you
 “ give, and the Doctrines which you maintain, in public and
 “ in private, be agreeable to that Liturgy, and those Articles:
 “ that you neither contradict, nor omit to inculcate and
 “ defend, on proper occasions, the truths, which they con-
 “ tain”.

Ibid, p. 327.

a return for the patient and respectful attention, with which your arguments, in the course of this correspondence, have been regarded, is all the satisfaction your friend is desirous of obtaining. Do him this justice before you express *publicly* your dissatisfaction; and then he will conclude, that his arguments must have been weak, which have failed to convince you — “ That you have
 “ set the *design* of the author of the Confessional, in an *invidious* and *false* light* —
 “ That your arguments in favour of the
 “ *right*†, as well as of the *utility*‡, of requiring such subscription as the question
 “ hath respect to, are inconclusive—That your
 “ attempting to vindicate the lawfulness of
 “ a *latitude* in subscribing, is inconsistent
 “ with your plea for the *utility* of subscription — That your objections to||, and reflections

* ANSWER, &c. Part I. p. 1—22.

† THE *Equitable* right is considered in Part I. from p. 22. to the end of that Part. The *scriptural* right is the subject of Part II.

‡ CONSIDERED above, p. 1—66.

|| CONSIDERED above, p. 66. to the End.

“flections upon, the *Expedient* offered by
“our author, to put this matter of subscription
“upon a better footing, strike equally against
“*all* expedients, too plainly indicating what
“turn they were intended to serve”.

I am,

Dear SIR,

Your most obedient

And very humble Servant,

BENJ. DAWSON:

E R R A T A.

Part I. Page 8. Line 10. for *seasonableness*, read *reasonableness*.

Part II. — 4. — 16. read $\tau\omega\sigma\varsigma$ διδασκῶν ?

———— 16. — 14. read *It was*.

———— 37. — 2. for *Bishop*, read *Bishops*.

Part III. — 35. — 21. for *therefore*, read *therefore*.

———— 44. — 17. read *whether it*.

———— 54. — 14. for *much*, read *must*.

———— 82. — 27. for *Secoudly*, read *Secondly*.

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